THE
STRANGE ADVENTURES
A PHAETON.
WILLIAM BLACK.
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IN TWO VOLUMES.
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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ
1872.
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BY
WILLIAM BLACK.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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SOUTHERN EDITION

SOUTHERN HISTORY

OF THE

CONFEDERATE STATES

VOL. II

THE

STRANGE ADVENTURES

OF

A PHAETON.

BY

WILLIAM BLACK,

AUTHOR OF "A DAUGHTER OF HETH," ETC.

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A NAPOLEON

OF

STRANGE ADVENTURES

THE

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THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF A PHAETON.

CHAPTER I.

OUR UHLAN OUT-MANŒUVRED.

"Come down, come down, my bonnie bird,
And eat bread aff my hand;
Your cage shall be of wiry goud,
Whar now it's but the wand."

"You are the most provoking husband I ever met with," says Queen Titania.

We are climbing up the steep ascent which leads from the village of Ellesmere to the site of an ancient castle. The morning is full of a breezy sunshine, and the cool north-wester stirs here and there a grey ripple on the blue waters of the lake below.

"I hope you have not had much experience in that direction," I observe.

"Very pretty. That is very nice indeed. We are improving, are we not?" she says, turning to Bell.

Bell, who has a fine colour in her face from the

light breeze and the brisk walking, puts her hand affectionately within her friend's arm, and says, in gentle accents—

"It is a shame to tease you so, you poor innocent little thing. But we will have our revenge. We will ask somebody else to protect you, my pet lamb!"

"Lamb—hm! Not much of the lamb visible, but a good deal of the vinegar sauce," says one of us, mindful of past favours.

It was a deadly quarrel. I think it had arisen out of Tita's inability to discover which way the wind was blowing; but the origin of our sham-fights had seldom much to do with their subsequent rise and progress.

"I wish I had married *you*, Count von Rosen," says my Lady, turning proudly and graciously to her companion on the right.

"Don't alarm the poor man," I say: and indeed the Lieutenant looked quite aghast.

"Madame," he replied gravely, when he had recovered himself, "it is very kind of you to say so; and if you had made me the offer sooner, I should have accepted it with great pleasure. But would there have been any difference? No, I think not—perhaps it would be the worse. It is merely that you are married; and you make believe to chafe against the

bonds. Now, I think you two would be very agreeable to each other if you were not married."

"Ah, well," said Tita, with an excellently constructed sigh; "I suppose we must look on marriage as a trial, and bear it with meekness and patience. We shall have our reward elsewhere."

Bell laughed, in a demure manner. That calm assumption of the virtues of meekness and patience was a little too much; but what was the use of further fighting on a morning like this? We got the key of a small gate. We climbed up a winding path through trees that were rustling in the sunlight. We emerged upon a beautiful green lawn—a bowling-green, in fact, girt in by a low hedge, and overlooked by a fancy little building. But the great charm of this elevated site was the panorama around and beyond. Windy clouds of white and grey kept rolling up out of the west, throwing splashes of purple gloom on the bright landscape. The trees waved and rustled in the cool breeze—the sunlight kept chasing the shadows across the far meadows. And then down below us lay the waters of Ellesmere lake—here and there a deep, dark blue, under the warm green of the woods, and here and there being stirred into a shimmer of white by the wind that was sweeping across the sky.

"And to-day we shall be in Chester, and to-morrow in Wales!" cried Bell, looking away up to the north,

where the sky was pretty well heaped up with the flying masses of cloud. She looked so bright and joyous then, that one could almost have expected her to take flight herself, and disappear like a wild bird amid the shifting lights and glooms of the windy day. The Lieutenant, indeed, seemed continually regarding her in rather an anxious and embarrassed fashion. Was he afraid she might escape? Or was he merely longing to get an opportunity of plunging into that serious business he had spoken of the night before? Bell was all unconscious. She put her hand within Tita's arm, and walked away over the green lawn, which was warm in the sunshine. We heard them talking of a picnic on this lofty and lonely spot—sketching out tents, archery-grounds, and what not, and assigning a place to the band. Then there were rumours of the "Haymakers" of "Roger de Coverley," of the "Guaracha," and I know not what other nonsense, coming towards us as the north-wester blew back to us fragments of their talk, until even the Lieutenant remarked that an old-fashioned country-dance would look very pretty up here, on such a fine piece of green, and with all the blue and breezy extent of a great English landscape forming the circular walls of this magnificent ball-room.

A proposal is an uncomfortable thing to carry about with one. Its weight is unconscionable, and on the merriest of days it will make a man down-hearted.

To ask a woman to marry is about the most serious duty which a man has to perform in life, even as some would say that it is the most unnecessary: and those who settled the relations of the sexes, before or after the Flood, should receive the gratitude of all womankind for the ingenuity with which they shifted on to male shoulders this heavy and grievous burden.

The Lieutenant walked down with us from the hill and through the little village to the inn as one distraught. He scarcely even spoke—and never to Bell. He regarded the getting out of the phaeton with a listless air. Castor and Pollux—whose affections he had stolen away from us through a whole series of sneaking kindnesses—whinnied to him in vain. When my Lady, who now assumed the responsibility of apportioning to us our seats, asked him to drive on, he obeyed mechanically.

Now our Bonny Bell, as I have said, was unconscious of the awful possibilities that hung over our adventures of that day; and was in as merry a mood as you could desire to see. She sat beside the Lieutenant; and scarcely had we gone gently along the narrow village street and out into the broader country road that leads northward, than she began to tell her companion of the manner in which Tita tyrannizes over our parish.

"You would not think it, would you?" she asked.

"No," said the Lieutenant, "I should not think she was a very ferocious lady."

"Then you don't know her," says a voice from behind; and Tita says, "Don't begin again," in an injured way, as if we were doing some sort of harm to the fine morning.

"I can assure you," said Bell, seriously, "that she rules the parish with a rod of iron. She knows every farthing that every labourer makes in the week, and he catches it if he does not bring home a fair proportion to his wife. 'Well, Jackson,' she says, 'I hear your master is going to give you fourteen shillings a week now.' 'Thank ye, ma'am,' he says, for he knows quite well who secured him the additional shilling to his wages. 'But I want you to give me threepence out of it for the savings bank; and your wife will gather up sixpence a week until she gets enough for another pair of blankets for you, now the winter is coming on, you know.' Well, the poor man dares not object. He gives up three-fourths of the shilling he had been secretly expecting to spend on beer, and does not say a word. The husbands in our parish have a bad time of it——"

"One of them has, at least," says that voice from behind.

"And you should see how our Tita will confront a huge fellow who is half bemused with beer, and

order him to be silent in her presence. 'How dare you speak to your wife like that before me!'—and he is as quiet as a lamb. And sometimes the wives have a turn of it too—not reproof, you know, but a look of surprise if they have not finished the sewing of the children's frocks which Tita and I have cut out for them—or if they have gone into the alehouse with their husbands late on the Saturday night—or if they have missed being at church next morning. Then you should see the farmers' boys playing pitch-and-toss in the road on the Sunday forenoons—how they scurry away like rabbits when they see her coming up from church—they fly behind stacks, or plunge through hedges—anything to get out of her way."

"And I am not assisted, Count von Rosen, in any of these things," says my Lady, "by a young lady who was once known to catch a small boy and shake him by the shoulders because he threw a stone at the clergyman as he passed."

"Then you do assist, Mademoiselle," inquires the Lieutenant, "in this overseeing of the parish?"

"Oh, I merely keep the books," replied Bell. "I am the treasurer of the savings bank, and I call a fortnightly meeting to announce the purchase of the various kinds of cotton and woollen stuffs, at wholesale prices, and to hear from the subscribers what they most need. Then we have the materials cut into patterns, we pay

so much to the women for sewing, and then we sell the things when they are made, so that the people pay for everything they get, and yet get it far cheaper than they would at a shop, while we are not out of pocket by it."

Here a deep groan is heard from the hind seat of the phaeton. That beautiful fiction about the ways and means of our local charities has existed in our household for many a day. The scheme is admirable. There is no pauperization of the peasantry around. The theory is that Queen Tita and Bell merely come in to save the cost of distribution; and that nothing is given away gratis except their charitable labour. It is a pretty theory. The folks round about us find it answers admirably. But somehow or other—whether from an error in Bell's book-keeping, or whether from a sudden rise in the price of flannel, or some other recondite and esoteric cause—all I know is that the system demands an annual subvention from the head of the house. Of course my Lady can explain all that away. There is some temporary defect in the working out of the scheme; the self-supporting character of it remains easy of demonstration. It may be so. But a good deal of bread—in the shape of cheques—has been thrown upon the waters in a certain district in England; while the true author of the charity—the real dispenser of these good things—is not considered in the matter, and is privately regarded as a sort of

grudging person, who does not understand the larger claims of humanity.

At length we have our first glimpse of Wales. From Ellesmere to Overton the road gradually ascends, until, just before you come to Overton, it skirts the edge of a high plateau, and all at once you are confronted by the sight of a great valley, through which a stream, brown as a Welsh rivulet ought to be, is slowly stealing. That narrow thread that twists through spacious woods and green meadows is the river Dee; far away beyond the valley that it waters, rise the blue masses of Cyrn-y-Brain and Cefn-y-Fedn, while to the south of the latter range lies the gap by which you enter the magic vale of Llangollen. On this breezy morning there were white clouds blowing over the dusky peaks of the mountains, while ever and anon, from a blue rift overhead, a shimmering line of silver would strike down, and cause the side of some distant hill to shine in pale brown, and grey, and gold.

"That is a very strange sight to me," said the Lieutenant, as the horses stood in the road; "all these great mountains, with, I think, no houses on them. That is the wild country into which the first inhabitants of this country fled when the German tribes swarmed over here—all that we have been taught at school: but only think of the difficulty the Berlin boy —living with nothing but miles of flat sand around

him—has to imagine a wild region like this, which gave shelter because no one could follow into its forest and rocks. And how are we to go? We cannot drive into these mountains."

"Oh, but there are very fine roads in Wales," said Bell; "broad, smooth, well-made roads; and you can drive through the most beautiful scenery, if you wish."

However, it was arranged we should not attempt anything of the kind, which would take us too far out of our route to Scotland. It was resolved to let the horses have a rest in Chester the next day, while we should take a run down by rail to Llanrwst and Bettws-y-Coed, merely to give our Uhlan a notion of the difficulties he would have to encounter in subduing this country, when the time came for that little expedition.

So we bowled through the little village of Overton, and down the winding road which plunges into the beautiful valley we had been regarding from the height. We had not yet struck the Dee; but it seemed as though the ordinary road down in this plain was a private path through a magnificent estate. As far as we could see, a splendid avenue of elms stretched on in front of us; and while we drove through the cool shade, on either side lay a spacious extent of park, studded with grand old oaks. At length we came upon the stream, flowing brown and clear, down

through picturesque and wooded banks; and then we got into open country again, and ran pleasantly up to Wrexham.

Perhaps the Lieutenant would have liked to bait the horses in some tiny village near to this beautiful stream. We should all have gone out for a saunter along the banks; and, in the pulling of wild flowers, or the taking of sketches, or some such idyllic employment, the party would in all likelihood have got divided. It would have been a pleasant opportunity for him to ask this gentle English girl to be his wife—with the sweet influences of the holiday-time disposing her to consent, and with the quiet of this wooded valley ready to catch her smallest admission. Besides, who could tell what might happen after Bell had reached Chester? That was the next of the large towns which Arthur had agreed to make points of communication. I think the Lieutenant began at this time to look upon large towns as an abomination, to curse telegraphs, and hate the penny post with a deadly hatred.

But in place of any such quiet resting-place, we had to put up Castor and Pollux in the brisk little town of Wrexham, which was even more than usually busy with its market-day. The Wynnstay Arms was full of farmers, seed-agents, implement makers, and what not, all roaring and talking to the last limit of their lungs—bustling about the place and calling for glasses of ale, or attacking huge joints of cold roast

beef with an appetite which had evidently not been educated on nothing. The streets were filled with the vendors of various wares; the wives and daughters of the farmers, having come in from the country in the dog-cart or waggonette, were promenading along the pavement in the most gorgeous hues known to silken and muslin fabrics; cattle were being driven through narrow thoroughfares; and the sellers of fruit and of fish in the market-place alarming the air with their invitations. The only quiet corner, indeed, was the churchyard and the church, through which we wandered for a little while; but young folks are not so foolish as to tell secrets in a building that has an echo.

Was there no chance for our unfortunate Uhlan?

"Hurry—hurry on to Chester!" cried Bell, as we drove away from Wrexham along the level northern road.

A gloomy silence had overtaken the Lieutenant. He was now sitting behind with my Lady, and she was doing her best to entertain him—(there never was a woman who could make herself more agreeable to persons not of her own household)—while he sat almost mute, listening respectfully, and half suffering himself to be interested.

Our pretty Bell, on the other hand, was all delight at the prospect of reaching the quaint old city that evening, and was busy with wild visions of our plunge

into Wales on the morrow, while ever and anon she hummed snatches of the Lieutenant's Burgundy song.*

"Please may I make a confession?" she asked, at length, in a low voice.

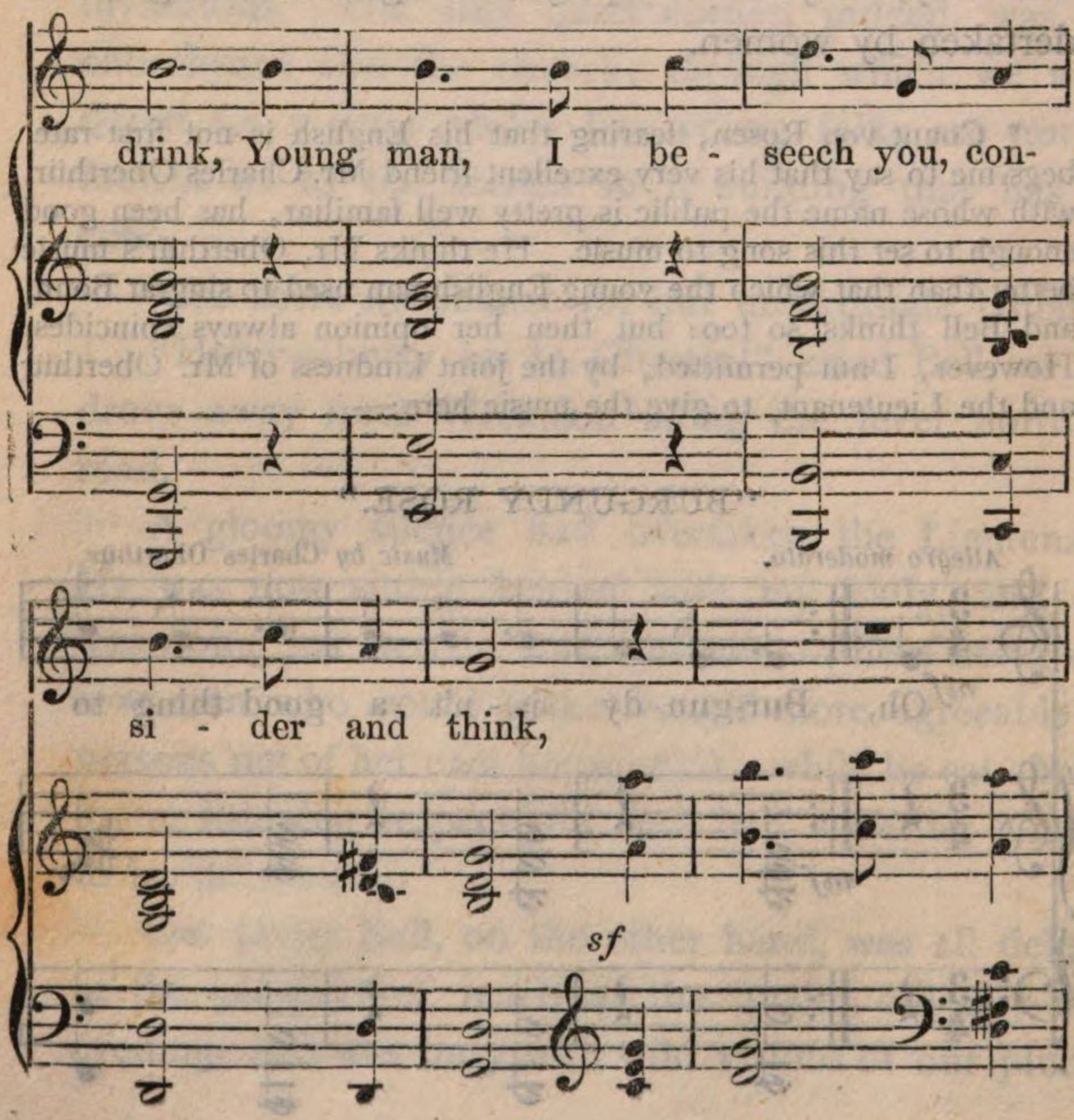
"Why, yes."

I hoped, however, she was not going to follow the example of the Lieutenant, and confide to me that she meditated making a proposal. Although men dislike this duty, they have a prejudice against seeing it undertaken by women.

* Count von Rosen, fearing that his English is not first-rate, begs me to say that his very excellent friend Mr. Charles Oberthür, with whose name the public is pretty well familiar, has been good enough to set this song to music. He thinks Mr. Oberthür's music better than that which the young Englishman used to sing at Bonn, and Bell thinks so too: but then her opinion always coincides. However, I am permitted, by the joint kindness of Mr. Oberthür and the Lieutenant, to give the music here:—

"BURGUNDY ROSE."

"All our journey has wanted but one thing," said Bell. "We have had everything that could be wished —bright weather, a comfortable way of travelling, much amusement, plenty of fights—indeed, there was nothing wanting but one thing, and that was the sea. Now did you ever try to look for it? Were you never anxious to see only a long thread of grey near the sky, and be quite sure that out there the woods stopped on the edge of a line of sand? I dared not tell Tita—for she



would have thought me very ungrateful, but I may tell you, for you don't seem to care about anybody's opinions—but I used to get a little vexed with the constant meadows, rivers, farms, hills, woods, and all that over and over again, and the sea not coming any nearer. Of course one had no right to complain, as I suppose it's put down in the map, and can't be altered; but we seem to have been a long time coming across the country to reach the sea."

"Why, you wild sea-gull, do you think that was our only object? A long time reaching the sea!—Don't imagine your anxiety was concealed. I saw you perpetually scanning the horizon, as if one level line were better than any other level line at such a distance. You began it on Richmond Hill, and would have us believe the waves of the Irish Channel were breaking somewhere about Windsor."

"No—no!" pleaded Bell; "don't think me ungrateful. I think we have been most fortunate in coming

Chorus. *A tempo.*

Tenori.

Bassi.

f

Bur - gun - dy rose, Bur - gun - dy

f

A tempo.

f

rose, A dan - ge - rous symp - tom is

as we did; and Count von Rosen must have seen every sort of English landscape—first the river-pictures about Richmond, then the wooded hills about Oxfordshire, then the plains of Berkshire, then the mere-country about Ellesmere—and now he is going into the mountains of Wales. But all the same we shall reach the sea to-morrow."

"What are you two fighting about?" says Queen Titania, interposing.

"We are not fighting," says Bell, in the meekest possible way; "we are not husband and wife."

"I wish you were," says the other, coolly.

"Madame," I observe at this point, "that is rather

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* For the last three verses see Vol. I. pp. 278. 279.

a dangerous jest to play with. It is now the second time you have made use of it this morning."

"And if I do repeat old jokes," says Tita, with a certain calm audacity, "it must be through the force of a continual example."

"——And such jests sometimes fix themselves in the mind until they develop and grow into a serious purpose."

"Does that mean that you would like to marry Bell? If it can be done legally and properly, I should not be sorry, I know. Can it be done, Count von Rosen? Shall we four go back to London with different partners? An exchange of husbands——"

Merciful Powers! what was the woman saying? She suddenly stopped, and an awful consternation fell on the whole four of us. That poor little mite of a creature had been taking no thought of her words, in her pursuit of this harmless jest; and somehow it had wandered into her brain that Bell and the Lieutenant were on the same footing as herself and I. A more embarrassing slip of the tongue could not be conceived; and for several dreadful seconds no one had the courage to speak, until Bell, wildly and incoherently —with her face and forehead glowing like a rose—asked whether there was a theatre in Chester.

"No," cries my Lady, eagerly; "don't ask us to go to the theatre to-night, Bell; let us go for a walk rather."

She positively did not know what she was saying. It was a wonder she did not propose we should go to the gardens of Cremorne, or up in a balloon. Her heart was filled with anguish and dismay over the horrible blunder she had made; and she began talking about Chester, in a series of disconnected sentences, in which the heartrending effort to appear calm and unconstrained was painfully obvious. Much as I have had to bear at the hands of that gentle little woman, I felt sorry for her then. I wondered what she and Bell would say to each other when they went off for a private confabulation at night.

By the time that we drew near Chester, however, this unfortunate incident was pretty well forgotten; and we were sufficiently tranquil to regard with interest the old city, which was now marked out in the twilight by the yellow twinkling of the gas-lamps. People had come forth for their evening stroll round the great wall which encircles the town. Down in the level meadows by the side of the Dee, lads were still playing cricket. The twilight, indeed, was singularly clear; and when we had driven into the town, and put up the phaeton at an enormous Gothic hotel which seemed to overawe the small old-fashioned houses in its neighbourhood, we too set out for a leisurely walk round the ancient ramparts.

But here again the Lieutenant was disappointed. How could he talk privately to Bell on this public

promenade? Lovers there were there, but all in solitary pairs. If Tita had only known that she and I were interfering with the happiness of our young folks, she would have thrown herself headlong into the moat rather than continue this unwilling persecution. As it was, she went peacefully along, watching the purple light of the evening fall over the great landscape around the city. The ruddy glow in the windows became more and more pronounced. There were voices of boys still heard down in the racecourse, but there was no more cricketing possible. In the still evening, a hush seemed to fall over the town; and when we got round to the weir on the river, the vague white masses of water that we could scarcely see, sent the sound of their roaring and tumbling, as it were, into a hollow chamber. Then we plunged once more into the streets. The shops were lit. The quaint galleries along the first floor of the houses, which are the special architectural glory of Chester, were duskily visible in the light of the lamps. And then we escaped into the yellow glare of the great dining-room of the Gothic hotel, and sat ourselves down for a comfortable evening.

"Well," I say to the Lieutenant, as we go into the smoking-room, when the women have retired for the night, "have you asked Bell yet?"

"No," he answers, morosely.

"Then you have escaped another day?"

"It was not my intention. I will ask her—whenever I get the chance—that I am resolved upon; and if she says 'No,' why, it is my misfortune, that is all."

"I have told you she is certain to say 'No.'"

"Very well."

"But I have a proposal to make."

"So have I," says the Lieutenant, with a gloomy smile.

"To-morrow you are going down to see a bit of Wales. Why spoil the day prematurely? Put it off until the evening, and then take your refusal like a man. Don't do Wales an injustice."

"Why," says the Lieutenant, peevishly, "you think nothing is important but looking at a fine country and enjoying yourself out of doors. I do not care what happens to a lot of mountains and rivers when this thing is for me far more important. When I can speak to Mademoiselle, I will do so; and I do not care if all Wales is put under water to-morrow——"

"After your refusal, the deluge. Well, it is a good thing to be prepared. But you need not talk in an injured tone, which reminds one oddly of Arthur."

You should have seen the stare on von Rosen's face.

"It is true. All you boys are alike when you fall in love—all unreasonable, discontented, perverse, and generally objectionable. It was all very well for you to call attention to that unhappy young man's conduct

when you were in your proper senses; but now, if you go on as you are going, it will be the old story over again."

"Then you think I will persecute Mademoiselle and be insolent to her and her friends?"

"All in good time. Bell refuses you to-morrow. You are gloomy for a day. You ask yourself why she has done so. Then you come to us and beg for our interference. We tell you it is none of our business. You say we are prejudiced against you, and accuse us of forwarding Arthur's suit. Then you begin to look on him as your successful rival. You grow so furiously jealous——"

Here the Uhlan broke into a tremendous laugh.

"My good friend, I have discovered a great secret," he cried. "Do you know who is jealous? It is you. You will oppose anyone who tries to take Mademoiselle away from you. And I—I will try—*and I will do it*."

From the greatest despondency he had leaped to a sort of wild and crazy hope of success. He smiled to himself, walked about the room, and talked in the most buoyant and friendly manner about the prospects of the morrow. He blew clouds of cigar-smoke about as if he were Neptune getting to the surface of the sea, and blowing back the sea-foam from about his face. And then, all at once, he sat down—we were the only occupants of the room—and said, in a hesitating way—

"Look here—do you think Madame could speak a word to her—if she does say 'No'?"

"I thought it would come to that."

"You are—what do you call it?—very unsympathetic."

"Unsympathetic! No; I have a great interest in both of you. But the whole story is so old, one has got familiar with its manifestations."

"It is a very old and common thing to be born, but it is a very important thing, and it only happens to you once."

"And falling in love only happens to you once, I suppose?"

"Oh no, many times. I have very often been in love with this girl or the other girl, but never until this time serious. I never before asked anyone to marry me; and surely this is serious—that I offer for her sake to give up my country, and my friends, and my profession—everything. Surely that is serious enough."

And so it was. And I knew that if ever he got Bell to listen favourably to him, he would have little difficulty in convincing her that he had never cared for anyone before, while she would easily assure him that she had always regarded Arthur only as a friend. For there are no lies so massive, audacious, and unblushing as those told by two young folks when they recount to each other the history of their previous love affairs.

CHAPTER II.

IN THE FAIRY GLEN.

"O Queen, thou knowest I pray not for this:
Oh set us down together in some place
Where not a voice can break our heaven of bliss,
Where nought but rocks and I can see her face
Softening beneath the marvel of thy grace,
Where not a foot our vanished steps can track,
The golden age, the golden age come back!"

LITTLE did our Bonny Bell reck of the plot that had been laid against her peace of mind. She was as joyous as a wild sea-bird when we drew near the sea. All the morning she had hurried us on; and we were at the station some twenty minutes before the train started. Then she must needs sit on the northern side of the carriage, close in by the window; and all at once, when there flashed before us a long and level stretch of grey-green, she uttered a quick low cry of gladness, as though the last wish of her life had been realized.

Yet there was not much in this glimpse of the sea that we got as we ran slowly along the coast-line towards Conway. It was a quiet grey day, with here and there a patch of blue overhead. The sea was stirred only by a ripple. Here and there it darkened into a breezy green, but for the most part it reflected the cold grey sky overhead. The shores were flat.

The tide was up, and not a rock to be seen. One or two small boats were visible; but no great full-rigged ship, with all her white sails swelling before the wind, swept onwards to the low horizon. But it was the sea—that was enough for this mad girl of ours. She had the window put down, and a cold odour of sea-weed flew through the carriage. If there was not much blue outside, there was plenty in the deep and lambent colour of her eyes, where pure joy and de-light fought strangely with the half-saddening influences produced by this first unexpected meeting with the sea.

Turning abruptly away from the coast-line—with the grey walls of Conway Castle overlooking the long sweep of the estuary—we plunged down into the mountains. The dark masses of firs up among the rocks were deepening in gloom. There was an un-earthly calm on the surface of the river, as if the reflection of the boulders, and the birch-bushes, and the occasional cottages, lay waiting for the first stirring of the rain. Then, far away up the cleft of the valley, a grey mist came floating over the hills; it melted whole mountains into a soft dull grey, it blotted out dark green forests and mighty masses of rock, until a pattering against the carriage windows told us that the rain had begun.

"It is always so in Wales," said my Lady, with a sigh.

But when we got out at Bettws-y-Coed, you would not have fancied our spirits were grievously oppressed. Indeed, I often remarked that we never enjoyed ourselves so much, whether in the phaeton or out of it, as when there was abundant rain about, the desperation of the circumstances driving us into being recklessly merry. So we would not take the omnibus that was carrying up to the Swallow Falls some half-dozen of those horrid creatures, the tourists. The deadly dislike we bore to these unoffending people was remarkable. What right had they to be invading this wonderful valley? What right had they to leave Bayswater and occupy seats at the *tables d'hôte* of hotels? We saw them drive away with a secret pleasure. We hoped they would get wet, and swear never to return to Wales. We called them tourists, in short, which has become a term of opprobrium among Englishmen; but we would have perished rather than admit for a moment that we too were tourists.

It did not rain very much. There was a strong resinous odour in the air, from the spruce, the larch, the pines, and the breckans, as we got through the wood, and ventured down the slippery paths which brought us in front of the Swallow Falls. There had been plenty of rain—and the foaming jets of water were darting among the rocks very much like the white glimmer of the marten as he cuts about the eaves of a house in the twilight. The roar of the

river filled the air, and joined in chorus the rustling of the trees in the wind. We could scarcely hear ourselves speak. It was not a time for confidences. We returned to Bettws.

But the Lieutenant, driven wild by the impossibility of placing all his sorrows before Bell, eagerly assented to the proposal that we should go and see the Fairy Glen—a much more retired spot—after luncheon. The dexterity he displayed in hurrying over that meal was remarkable. It was rather a scramble—for a number of visitors were in the place; and the long table was pretty well filled up. But with a fine audacity our Uhlan constituted himself waiter for our party, and simply harried the hotel. If my Lady's eyes only happened to wander towards a particular dish, it was before her in a twinkling. The Lieutenant alarmed many a young lady there by first begging her pardon and then reaching over her shoulder to carry off some huge plate; although he presently atoned for these misdemeanours by carving a couple of fowls for the use of the whole company. He also made the acquaintance of a governess who was in charge of two tender little women of twelve and fourteen. He sat down by the governess; discovered that she had been at Bettws for some weeks; got from her some appalling statistics of the rain that had fallen; then—for the maids were rather remiss—went and got her a bottle of ale, which he drew for

her, and poured out and graciously handed to her. Bell was covertly laughing all the time: my Lady was amazed.

"Now," he said, turning in quite a matter-of-fact way to us, "when do we start for this Fairy Glen?"

"Pray don't let us take you away from such charming companionship," observed my Lady, with a smile.

"Oh, she is a very intelligent person," says the Lieutenant; "really a very intelligent person. But she makes a great mistake in preferring Schiller's plays to Lessing's for her pupils. I tried to convince her of that. She is going to the Rhine with those young ladies, later on in the year—to Königswinter. Would it not be a very nice thing for us all, when we leave the phaeton at your home, to go for a few weeks to Königswinter?"

"We cannot all flirt with a pretty governess," says Tita.

"Now that is too bad of you English ladies," retorts the Lieutenant. "You must always think, when a man talks to a girl, he wants to be in love with her. No—it is absurd. She is intelligent—a good talker—she knows very many things—and she is a stranger like myself in an hotel. Why should I not talk to her?"

"You are quite right, Count von Rosen," says Bell.

Of course he was quite right. He was always quite right! But wait a bit.

We set off for the Fairy Glen. The rain had ceased; but the broad and smooth roads were yellow with water; large drops still fell from the trees, and the air was humid and warm. The Lieutenant lit a cigar about as big as a wooden leg; and Bell insisted on us two falling rather behind, because that she liked the scent of a cigar in the open air.

We crossed the well-known Waterloo Bridge—built in the same year as that which chronicled the great battle—and we heard the Lieutenant relating to Tita how several of his relatives had been in the army which came up to help us on that day.

"You know we had won before you came up," said my Lady, stoutly.

The Lieutenant laughed.

"I am not sure about that," he said; "but you did what we could not have done—you held the whole French army by yourselves, and crippled it so that our mere appearance on the battle-field was enough."

"I think it was very mean of both of you," said Bell, "to win a battle by mere force of numbers. If you had given Napoleon a chance——"

"Mademoiselle," said von Rosen, "the object of a campaign is to win battles—anyhow. You throw away the heroic elements of the old single combatants when it is with armies that you fight; and you take all ad-

vantages you can get. But who was the braver then —your small English army, or the big French one that lost the whole day without overwhelming their enemy, and waited until we came down to drive them back? That is a very good word—a very strong word —our *zurückgeworfen*. It is a very good thing to see that word at the end of a sentence that talks of your enemies."

At length we got to the neighbourhood of the Fairy Glen, and found ourselves in among the wet trees, with the roar of the stream reverberating through the woods. There were a great many paths in this pretty ravine. You can go close down to the water, and find still pools reflecting the silver-lichened rocks; or you can clamber along the high banks through the birch and hazel and elm, and look down on the white waterfalls beneath you that wet the ferns and bushes about with their spray. Four people need not stay together. Perhaps it was because of an extraordinary change in the aspect of the day that Tita and I lost sight of the young folks. Indeed, we had sat down upon a great smooth boulder and were pensively enjoying the sweet scents around, and the plashing of the stream, when this strange thing occurred, so that we never remembered that our companions had gone. Suddenly into the gloomy grey day there leaped a wild glow of yellow fire; and far up the narrowing vista of the glen—where the rocks grew closer together

—the sunlight smote down on the gleaming green of the underwood, until it shone and sparkled over the smooth pools. The light came nearer. There was still a sort of mist of dampness in the atmosphere—hanging about the woods, and dulling the rich colours of the glen; but as the sunlight came straggling down the rocky ravine, a dash of blue gleamed out, overhead, and a rush of wind through the dripping green branches seemed to say that the wet was being swept off the mountains and towards the sea. The Fairy Glen was now a blaze of transparent green and fine gold, with white diamonds of raindrops glittering on the ferns and moss and bushes. It grew warm, too, down in the hollow; and the sweet odours of the forest above—woodruff, and campion, and wild mint, and some decayed leaves of the great St. John's wort—all stole out into the moist air.

"Where have they gone?" says Tita, almost sharply.

"My dear," I say to her, "you were young yourself once. It's a good time ago—but still——"

"Bell never asked for letters this morning," remarked my Lady, showing the direction her thoughts were taking.

"No matter, Arthur will be meeting us directly. He is sure to come over to our route in his dog-cart."

"We must find them, and get back to Bettws-y-Coed," is the only reply which is vouchsafed me.

They were not far to seek. When we had clambered up the steep bank to the path overhead, Bell and the Lieutenant were standing in the road, silent. As soon as they saw us, they came slowly walking down. Neither spoke a word. Somehow, Bell managed to attach herself to Tita; and these two went on ahead.

"You were right," said the Lieutenant, in a low voice, very different from his ordinary light and careless fashion.

"You have asked her, then?"

"Yes."

"And she refused?"

"Yes."

"I thought she would."

"Now," he said, "I suppose I ought to go back to London."

"Why?"

"It will not be pleasant for her—my being here. It will be very embarrassing to both of us."

"Nonsense. She will regard it as a joke."

I am afraid our Uhlan looked rather savage at this moment.

"Don't you see," I observed to him seriously, "that if you go away in this manner you will give the affair a tremendous importance, and make all sorts of explanations necessary? Why not school yourself to meeting her on ordinary terms; and take it that your ques-

tion was a sort of preliminary sounding, as it were, without prejudice to either?"

"Then you think I should ask her again, at some future time?" he said eagerly.

"I don't think anything of the kind."

"Then why should I remain here?"

"I hope you did not come with us merely for the purpose of proposing to Bell."

"No; that is true enough—but our relations are now all altered. I do not know what to do."

"Don't do anything: meet her as if nothing of the kind had occurred. A sensible girl like her will think more highly of you in doing that than in doing some wild and mad thing, which will only have the effect of annoying her and yourself. Did she give you any reason?"

"I do not know," said von Rosen, disconsolately. "I am not sure what I said. Perhaps I did not explain enough. Perhaps she thought me blunt, rude, coarse, in asking her so suddenly. It was all a sort of fire for a minute or two—and then the cold water came—and that lasts."

The two women were now far ahead—surely they were walking fast that Bell might have an opportunity of confiding all her perplexities to her friend.

"I suppose," said von Rosen, "that I suffer for my own folly. I might have known. But for this day or two back, it has seemed so great a chance to me—of

getting her to promise at least to think of it—and the prospect of having such a wife as that—it was all too much. Perhaps I have done the worst for myself by the hurry; but was it not excusable in a man to be in a hurry to ask such a girl to be his wife? And there is no harm in knowing soon that all that was impossible."

Doubtless it was comforting to him to go on talking. I wondered what Bell was saying at this moment; and whether a comparison of their respective views would throw some light on the subject. As for the Lieutenant, he seemed to regard Bell's decision as final. If he had been a little older, he might not; but having just been plunged from the pinnacle of hope into an abyss of despair, he was too stunned to think of clambering up again by degrees.

But even at this time all his thoughts were directed to the best means of making his presence as little of an embarrassment to Bell as possible.

"This evening will pass away very well," he said, "for everybody will be talking at dinner, and we need not to address each other; but to-morrow—if you think this better that I remain with you—then you will drive the phaeton, and you will give Mademoiselle the front seat—for the whole day? Is it agreed, yes?"

"Certainly. You must not think of leaving us at present. You see, if you went away we should have to send for Arthur."

A sort of flame blazed up into the face of the Lieutenant; and he said, in a rapid and vehement way—

"This thing I will say to you—if Mademoiselle will not marry me—good. It is the right of every girl to have her choice. But if you allow her to marry that pitiful fellow, it will be a shame—and you will not forgive yourself, either Madame or you, in the years afterwards—that I am quite sure of!"

"But what have we to do with Bell's choice of a husband?"

"You talked just now of sending for him to join your party."

"Why, Bell isn't bound to marry everyone who comes for a drive with us. Your own case is one in point."

"But this is quite different. This wretched fellow thinks he has an old right to her, as being an old friend, and all that stupid nonsense; and I know that she has a strange idea that she owes to him——"

The Lieutenant suddenly stopped.

"No," he said, "I will not tell you what she did tell to me this afternoon. But I think you know it all; and it will be very bad of you to make a sacrifice of her by bringing him here——"

"If you remain in the phaeton, we can't."

"Then I will remain."

"Thank you. As Tita and I have to consider our-

selves just a little bit—amid all this whirl of love-making and reckless generosity—I must say we prefer your society to that of Master Arthur."

"That is a very good compliment!" says von Rosen, with an ungracious sneer—for who ever heard of a young man of twenty-six being just to a young man of twenty-two when both wanted to marry the same young lady?

We overtook our companions. Bell and I walked on together to the hotel, and subsequently down to the station. An air of gloom seemed to hang over the heavy forests far up amid the grey rocks. The river had a mournful sound as it came rushing down between the mighty boulders. Bell scarcely uttered a word as we got into the carriage and slowly steamed away from the platform.

Whither had gone the joy of her face? She was once more approaching the sea. Under ordinary circumstances you would have seen an anticipatory light in her blue eyes, as if she already heard the long plash of the waves, and smelt the sea-weed. Now she sat in a corner of the carriage; and when at last we came in view of the most beautiful sight that we had yet met on our journey, she sat and gazed at it with the eyes of one distraught.

That was a rare and wild picture we saw when we got back to the sea. The heavy rain-clouds had sunk down until they formed a low dense wall of purple all

along the line of the western horizon, between the sea and the sky. That heavy bar of cloud was almost black; but just above it there was a calm fair stretch of lambent green, with here and there a torn shred of crimson cloud and one or two lines of sharp gold, lying parallel with the horizon. But away over in the east again were some windy masses of cloud that had caught a blush of red; and these had sent a pale reflection down on the sea—a sort of salmon-colour that seemed the complement of the still gold-green overhead.

The sunset touched faintly the low mountains about the mouth of the Dee. A rose-red glimmer struck the glass of the window at which Bell sat; and then, as the train made a slight curve in the line running by the shore, the warm light entered and lit up her face with a rich and beautiful glow. The Lieutenant, hidden in the dusk of the opposite corner, was regarding her with wistful eyes. Perhaps he thought that now, more than ever, she looked like some celestial being far out of his reach, whom he had dared to hope would forsake her strange altitudes and share his life with him. Tita, saying nothing, was also gazing out of the window, and probably pondering on the unhappy climax that seemed to put an end to her friendly hopes.

Darkness fell over the sea and the land. The great plain of water seemed to fade away into the gloom of the horizon; but here, close at hand, the pools on the

shore occasionally caught the last reflection of the sky, and flashed out a gleam of yellow fire. The wild intensity of the colours was almost painful to the eyes—the dark blue-green of the shore-plants and the sea-grass; the gathering purple of the sea; the black rocks on the sand; and then that sudden bewildering flash of gold where a pool had been left among the sea-weed. The mountains in the south had now disappeared; and were doubtless—away in that mysterious darkness—wreathing themselves in the cold night-mists that were slowly rising from the woods and the valleys of the streams.—Such was our one and only glimpse of Wales; and the day that Bell had looked forward to with such eager delight had closed in silence and despair.

When we got back to the hotel, a letter from Arthur was lying on the table.

CHAPTER III.

THE COLLAPSE.

"Thy crowded ports,
Where rising masts an endless prospect yield,
With labour burn, and echo to the shouts
Of hurried sailor, as he hearty waves
His last adieu, and, loosening every sheet,
Resigns the spreading vessel to the wind."

THE following correspondence has been handed to us for publication:—

"COWLEY HOUSE, TWICKENHAM,
July —, 1871.

"Mon cher Mamma,—Doctor Ashburton dire me que je écris a vous dans Fransais je sais Fransais un pettit et ici est un letter a vous dans Fransais mon cher Mamma le Pony est trai bien et je sui mon cher Mamma.

"Voter aimé fils,

"TOM."

"COWLEY HOUSE, TWICKENHAM,
July —, 1871.

"My dear Papa,—Tom as written Mamma a letter in French and Doctor Ashburton says I must Begin to learn French too but Tom says it is very difficult and it takes a long time to write a Letter with the dixonary and he says my dear Papa that we must learn German Too but please may I learn German first and you will

give my love to the German gentleman who gave us the poney he is very well my dear Papa and very fat and round and hard in the sides Harry French says if he goes on eeting like that he will burst but me and Tom only laughed at him and we rode him down to Stanes and back which is a long way and I only tumbled off twice but once into the ditch for he wanted to eat the Grass and I Pooled at him and slipt over is head but I was not much Wet and I went to bed until Jane dryed all my close and no one new of it but her Pleese my dear papa how is Auntie Bell, and we send our love to her, and to my dear mamma and I am your affexnate son,

"JACK.

"P.S. All the monney you sent as gone away for oats and beans and hay. Pleese my dear Papa to send a good lot more."

"—— INN, OAKHAM, *Friday Afternoon.*

" . . . . You will see I have slightly departed from the route I described in a telegram to Bell. Indeed, I find myself so untrammelled in driving this light dog-cart, with a powerful little animal that never seems fatigued, that I can go anywhere without fearing there will not be accommodation for a pair of horses and a large party. I am sure you must often have been put to straits in securing rooms for so many at a small

country inn. Probably you know the horse I have got—it is the cob that Major Quinet bought from Heathcote. I saw him by the merest accident when I returned from Worcester to London—told him what I meant to do—he offered me the cob with the greatest good-nature—and as I knew I should be safer with it than anything I could hire, I accepted. You will see I have come a good pace. I started on the Tuesday morning after I saw you at Worcester, and here I am at Oakham, rather over ninety miles. To-morrow I hope to be in Nottingham, about other thirty. Perhaps, if you will allow me, I may strike across country, by Huddersfield and Skipton, and pay you a visit at Kendal. I hope Bell is well, and that you are not having much rain. I have had the most delightful weather.

"Yours sincerely,

"ARTHUR ASHBURTON."

"It is a race," said the Lieutenant, "who shall be at Carlisle first."

"Arthur will beat," remarked Bell, looking to my Lady; and although nothing could have been more innocent than that observation, it seemed rather to take von Rosen down a bit. He turned to the window and looked out.

"I think it was very foolish of Major Quinet to lend him that beautiful little bay cob to go on such

an expedition as that," said Tita. "He will ruin it entirely. Fancy going thirty miles a day without giving the poor animal a day's rest! Why should he be so anxious to overtake us? If we had particularly wanted him to accompany us, we should have asked him to do so."

"He does not propose to accompany you," I say. "He is only coming to pay you a visit."

"I know what that means," says my Lady, with a tiny shrug; "something like the arrival of a mother-in-law, with a carriageful of luggage."

"My dear," I say to her, "why should you speak scornfully of the amiable and excellent lady who is responsible for your bringing up?"

"I was not speaking of my mamma," says Tita, "but of the abstract mother-in-law."

"A man never objects to an abstract mother-in-law. Now, your mamma—although she is not to be considered as a mother-in-law——"

"My mamma never visits me but at my own request," says my Lady, with something of loftiness in her manner; "and I am sorry she makes her visits so short, for when *she* is in the house, I am treated with some show of attention and respect."

"Well," I say to her, "if a mother-in-law can do no better than encourage hypocrisy——But I bear no malice. I will take some sugar, if you please."

"And as for Arthur," continues Tita, turning to Bell, "what must I say to him?"

"Only that we shall be pleased to see him, I suppose," is the reply.

The Lieutenant stares out into the streets of Chester, as though he did not hear.

"We cannot ask him to go with us—it would look too absurd—a dog-cart trotting after us all the way."

"He might be in front," says Bell, "if the cob is so good a little animal as he says."

"I wonder how Major Quinet could have been so stupid," says Tita, with a sort of suppressed vexation.

The reader may remember that a few days ago Major Quinet was a white-souled angel of a man, to whom my Lady had given one of those formal specifications of character which she has always at hand when anyone is attacked. Well, one of the party humbly recalls that circumstance. He asks in what way Major Quinet has changed within the past two days. Tita looks up, with that sort of quick, triumphant glance which tells beforehand that she has a reply ready, and says—

"If Major Quinet has committed a fault, it is one of generosity. That is an error not common among men—especially men who have horses, and who would rather see their own wives walk through the mud to the station than let their horses get wet."

"Bell, what is good for you, when you're sat upon?"

"Patience," says Bell: and then we go out into the old and grey streets of Chester.

It was curious to notice now the demeanour of our hapless Lieutenant towards Bell. He had had a whole night to think over his position; and in the morning he seemed to have for the first time fully realized the hopelessness of his case. He spoke of it—before the women came down—in a grave, matter-of-fact way, not making any protestation of suffering, but calmly accepting it as a matter for regret. One could easily see, however, that a good deal of genuine feeling lay behind these brief words.

Then, when Bell came down he showed her a vast amount of studied respect; but spoke to her of one or two ordinary matters in a careless tone, as if to assure everybody that nothing particular had happened. The girl herself was not equal to any such effort of amiable hyprocrisy. She was very timid. She agreed with him in a hurried way whenever he made the most insignificant statement, and showed herself obtrusively anxious to take his side when my Lady, for example, doubted the efficacy of carbolic soap. The Lieutenant had no great interest in carbolic soap—had never seen it, indeed, until that morning; but Bell was so anxious to be kind to him, that she defended the

compound as if she had been the inventor and patentee of it.

"It is very awkward for me," said the Lieutenant, as we were strolling through the quaint thoroughfares —Bell and my Lady leading the way along the piazzas formed on the first floor of the houses; "it is very awkward for me to be always meeting her, and more especially in a room. And she seems to think that she has done me some wrong. That is not so. That is quite a mistake. It is a misfortune—that is all; and the fault is mine that I did not understand sooner. Yet I wish we were again in the phaeton. Then there is great life—motion—something to do and think about. I cannot bear this doing of nothing."

Well, if the Lieutenant's restlessness was to be appeased by hard work, he was likely to have enough of it that day; for we were shortly to take the horses and phaeton across the estuary of the Mersey, by one of the Birkenhead ferries; and anyone who has engaged in that pleasing operation knows the excitement of it. Von Rosen chafed against the placid monotony of the Chester streets. The passages under the porticoes are found to be rather narrow of a forenoon, when a crowd of women and girls have come out to look at the shops, and when the only alternative to waiting one's turn and getting along is to descend ignominiously into the thoroughfare below. Now, no stranger who comes to Chester would think of walking

along an ordinary pavement, so long as he can pace through those quaint old galleries that are built on the roofs of the ground-row of shops and cellars. The Lieutenant hung aimlessly about—just as you may see a husband lounging and staring in Regent-street while his wife is examining with a deadly interest the milliners' and jewellers' windows. Bell bought presents for the boys. My Lady purchased photographs. In fact, we conducted ourselves like the honest Briton abroad, who buys a lot of useless articles in every town he comes to, chiefly because he has nothing else to do, and may as well seize that opportunity of talking to the natives.

Then our bonny bays were put into the phaeton, and, with a great sense of freedom shining on the face of our Uhlan, we started once more for the north. Bell was sitting beside me. That had been part of the arrangement. But why was she so pensive? Why this profession of tenderness and an extreme interest and kindness? I had done her no injury.

"Bell," I say to her, "have you left all your wildness behind you—buried down at the foot of Box Hill, or calmly interred under a block of stone up on Mickleham Downs? Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set my Lady frowning at you as if you were an incorrigible Tom-boy? Come, now, touching

that ballad of the Bailiff's Daughter—the guitar has not been out for a long time——"

A small gloved hand was gently and furtively laid on my arm. There was to be no singing.

"I think," said Bell, aloud, "that this is a very pretty piece of country to lie between two such big towns as Chester and Liverpool."

The remark was not very profound, but it was accurate, and it served its purpose of pushing away finally that suggestion about the guitar. We were now driving up the long neck of land lying between the parallel estuaries of the Dee and the Mersey. About Backford, and on by Great Sutton and Childer Thornton to Eastham, the drive was pleasant enough —the windy day and passing clouds giving motion and variety to the undulating pasture-land and the level fields of the farms. But as we drove carelessly through the green landscape, all of a sudden we saw before us a great forest of masts—grey streaks in the midst of the horizon—and behind them a cloud of smoke arising from an immense stretch of houses. We discovered, too, the line of the Mersey; and by and by we could see its banks widening, until the boats in the bed of the stream could be vaguely made out in the distance.

"Shall we remain in Liverpool this evening?" asks Bell.

"As you please."

Bell had been more eager than any of us to hurry on our passage to the north, that we should have abundant leisure in the Lake country. But a young lady who finds herself in an embarrassing position may imagine that the best refuge she can have in the evening is the theatre.

"Pray don't," says Tita. "We shall be at Liverpool presently, and it would be a great pity to throw away a day, when we shall want all the spare time we can get when we reach Kendal."

Kendal! It was the town at which Arthur was to meet us. But of course my Lady had her way. Since von Rosen chose to sit mute, the decision rested with her; and so the driver, being of an equable disposition, and valuing the peace of mind of the party far above the respect that ought to have been shown to Liverpool, meekly took his orders, and sent the horses on.

But it was a long way to Liverpool, despite Tita's assurances. The appearances of the landscape were deceitful. The smoke on the other side of the river seemed to indicate that the city was close at hand; but we continued to roll along the level road without apparently coming one whit nearer Birkenhead. We crossed Bromborough Pool. We went by Primrose Hill. We drove past the grounds apparently surrounding some mansion, only to find the level road still stretching on before us. Then there were a few

cottages. Houses of an unmistakably civic look began to appear. Suburban villas with gardens walled in with brick studded the roadside. Factories glimmered grey in the distance. An odour of coal-smoke was perceptible in the air; and finally, with a doleful satisfaction, we had the wheels of the phaeton rattling over a grimy street, and we knew we were in Birkenhead.

There was some excuse for the Lieutenant losing his temper—even if he had not been in rather a gloomy mood, to begin with. The arrangements for the transference of carriage horses across the Mersey are of a nebulous description. When we drove down the narrow passage to Tranmere Ferry, the only official we could secure was a hulking lout of a fellow of decidedly hang-dog aspect. Von Rosen asked him, civilly enough, if there was anyone about who could take the horses out, and superintend the placing of them and the phaeton in the ferry. There was no such person. Our friend in moleskin hinted in a surly fashion that the Lieutenant might do it for himself. But he would help, he said; and therewith he growled something about being paid for his trouble. I began to fear for the safety of that man. The river is deep just close by.

Bell and Tita had to be got out, and tickets taken for the party and for the horses and phaeton. When I returned, the Lieutenant, with rather a firm-set

mouth, was himself taking the horses out, while the loafer in moleskin stood at some little distance, scowling and muttering scornful observations at the same time.

"Ha! have you got the tickets?" said our Uhlan. "That is very good. We shall do by ourselves. Can you get out the nosebags, that we shall pacify them on going across? I have told this fellow—if he comes near to the horses—if he speaks one more word to me—he will be in the river the next moment; and that is quite sure as I am alive."

But there was no one who could keep the horses quiet like Bell. When they were taken down the little pier, she walked by their heads, and spoke to them, and stroked their noses; and then she swiftly got on board the steamer to receive them. The Lieutenant took hold of Pollux. The animal had been quiet enough, even with the steamer blowing and puffing in front of him, but when he found his hoofs striking on the board between the pier and the steamer, he threw up his head, and strove to back. The Lieutenant held on by both hands. The horse went back another step. It was a perilous moment, for there is no railing to the board which forms the gangway to those ferry-steamers, and if the animal had gone to one side or the other, he and von Rosen would have been in the water together. But with a "Hi! hoop!" and a little touch of the whip from be-

hind, the horse sprang forward, and was in the boat before he knew. And there was Bell at his head, talking in an endearing fashion to him as the Lieutenant pulled the strap of the nosebag up; and one horse was safe.

There was less to do with Castor; that prudent animal, with his eyes staring wildly around, feeling his way gingerly on the sounding board, but not pausing all the same. Then he too had his nosebag to comfort him; and when the steamer uttered a yell of a whistle through its steam-pipe, the two horses only started and knocked their hoofs about on the deck—for they were very well employed, and Bell was standing in front of their heads, talking to them and pacifying them.

Then we steamed slowly out into the broad estuary. A strong wind was blowing up channel, and the yellow-brown waves were splashing about with here and there a bold dash of blue on them from the gusty sky overhead. Far away down the Mersey the shipping seemed to be like a cloud along the two shores; and out on the wide surface of the river were large vessels being tugged about, and mighty steamers coming up to the Liverpool piers. When one of these bore down upon us so closely that she seemed to overlook our little boat, the two horses forgot their corn and flung their heads about a bit; but the

Lieutenant had a firm grip of them, and they were eventually quieted.

He had by this time recovered from his fit of wrath. Indeed, he laughed heartily over the matter, and said—

"I am afraid I did give that lounging fellow a great fright. He does not understand German, I suppose; but the sound of what I said to him had great effect upon him—I can assure you of that. He retreated from me hastily. It was some time before he could make out what had happened to him; and then he did not return to the phaeton."

The horses bore the landing on the other side very well; and, with but an occasional tremulous start, permitted themselves to be put-to on the quay, amid the roar and confusion of arriving and departing steamers. We were greatly helped in this matter by an amiable policeman, who will some day, I hope, become Colonel and Superintendent of the Metropolitan Force.

Werther, amid all this turmoil, was beginning to forget his sorrows. We had a busy time of it. He and Bell had been so occupied with the horses in getting them over that they had talked almost frankly to each other; and now there occurred some continuation of the excitement in the difficulties that beset us. For, after we had driven into the crowded streets, we found that the large hotels in Liverpool

have no mews attached to them; and in our endeavours to secure in one place entertainment for both man and beast, some considerable portion of our time was consumed. At length we found stabling in Hatton Garden; and then we were thrown on the wide world of Liverpool to look after our own sustenance.

"Mademoiselle," said the Lieutenant—rather avoiding the direct look of her eyes, however—"if you would prefer to wait, and go to a theatre to-night——"

"Oh no, thank you," said Bell, quite hurriedly—as if she were anxious not to have her own wishes consulted; "I would much rather go on as far as we can to-day."

The Lieutenant said nothing—how could he? He was but six-and-twenty, or thereabouts, and had not yet discovered a key to the Rosamond's maze of a woman's wishes.

So we went to a restaurant fronting a dull square, and dined. We were the only guests. Perhaps it was luncheon; perhaps it was dinner—we had pretty well forgotten the difference by this time, and were satisfied if we could get something to eat, anywhere, thrice a day.

But it was only too apparent that the pleasant relations with which we had started had been seriously altered. There was a distressing politeness prevailing throughout this repast, and Bell had so far forgotten her ancient ways as to become quite timid and

nervously formal in her talk. As for my Lady, she forgot to say sharp things. Indeed, she never does care for a good brisk quarrel, unless there are people present ready to enjoy the spectacle. Fighting for the mere sake of fighting is a blunder; but fighting in the presence of a circle of noble dames and knights becomes a courtly tournament. All our old amusements were departing—we were like four people met in a London drawing-room; and, of course, we had not bargained for this sort of thing on setting out. It had all arisen from Bell's excessive tenderness of heart. She had possessed herself with some wild idea that she had cruelly wronged our Lieutenant. She strove to make up for this imaginary injury by a show of courtesy and kindness that was embarrassing to the whole of us. The fact is, the girl had never been trained in the accomplishments of city life. She regarded a proposal of marriage as something of consequence. There was a defect, too, about her pulsation: her heart—that ought to have gone regularly through the multiplication table in the course of its beating, and never changed from twice one to twelve times twelve—made frantic plunges here and there, and slurred over whole columns of figures in order to send an anxious and tender flush up to her forehead and face. A girl who was so little mistress of herself, that—on a winter's evening, when we happened to talk of the summer-time and of half-forgotten walks near

Ambleside and Coniston—tears might suddenly be seen to well up in her blue eyes, was scarcely fit to take her place in a modern drawing-room. At this present moment her anxiety, and a sort of odd self-accusation, were really spoiling our holiday: but we did not bear our Bell much malice.

It was on this evening that we were destined to make our first acquaintance with the alarming method of making roads which prevails between Liverpool and Preston. It is hard to say by what process of fiendish ingenuity these petrified sweetbreads have been placed so as to occasion the greatest possible trouble to horses' hoofs, wheels, and human ears; and it is just as hard to say why such roads—although they may wear long in the neighbourhood of a city inviting constant traffic—should be continued out into country districts where a cart is met with about once in every five miles. These roads do not conduce to talking. One thinks of the unfortunate horses, and of the effect on springs and wheels. Especially in the quiet of a summer's evening, the frightful rumbling over the wedged-in stones seems strangely discordant. And yet, when one gets clear of the suburban slums and the smoke of Liverpool, a very respectable appearance of real country-life becomes visible. When you get out to Walton Nurseries and on towards Aintree Station and Maghull, the landscape looks fairly green, and the grass is of a nature to support animal life. There is

nothing very striking in the scenery, it is true. Even the consciousness that away beyond the flats on the left the sea is washing over the great sandbanks on to the level shores, does not help much; for who can pretend to hear the whispering of the far-off tide amid the monotonous rattling over these abominable Lancashire stones? We kept our teeth well shut, and went on. We crossed the small river of Alt. We whisked through Maghull village. The twilight was gathering fast as we got on to Aughton, and in the dusk—lit up by the yellow stars of the street lamps—we drove into Ormskirk. The sun had gone down red in the west: we were again assured as to the morrow.

But what would be the good of another bright morning to this melancholy Uhlan? Misfortune seemed to have marked us for its own. We drove into the yard of what was apparently the biggest inn in the place; and while the women were sent into the inn, the Lieutenant and I happened to remain a little while to look after the horses. Imagine our astonishment, therefore (after the animals had been taken out and our luggage uncarted), to find there was no accommodation for us inside the building.

"Confounded house!" growled the Lieutenant, in German; "thou hast betrayed me!"

So there was nothing for it but to leave the phaeton where it was, and issue forth in quest of a house in

which to hide our heads. It was an odd place when we found it. A group of women regarded us with a frightened stare. In vain we invited them to speak. At length another woman—little less alarmed than the others, apparently—made her appearance, and signified that we might, if we chose, go into a small parlour smelling consumedly of gin and coarse tobacco. After all, we found the place was not so bad as it looked. Another chamber was prepared for us. Our luggage was brought round. Ham and beer were provided for our final meal, with some tea in a shaky teapot. There was nothing romantic in this dingy hostelry, or in this dingy little town; but were we not about to reach a more favoured country—the beautiful and enchanted land of which Bell had been dreaming so long?—

"Kennst du es wohl? Dahin, dahin,
Möcht' ich mit dir, O mein Geliebter, ziehn!"

[*Note by Queen Titania.*—"I confess that I cannot understand these young people. On our way from the Fairy Glen back to Bettws-y-Coed, Bell told me something of what had occurred; but I really could not get from her any *proper* reason for her having acted so. She was much distressed, of course. I forbore to press her, lest we should have a *scene*, and I would not hurt the girl's feelings for the world, for she is as dear to me as one of my own children. But she could give no explanation. If she had said that Count von Rosen had been too precipitate, I could have understood it. She said she had known him a very short time; and that she could not judge of a proposition coming so unexpectedly; and that she could not consent to his leaving his country and his profession for her sake. These are only such objections as every girl uses when she *really means* that she does not wish to marry. I asked her why. She had no objections to urge against

Lieutenant von Rosen personally—as how *could* she?—for he is a most gentlemanly young man, with abilities and accomplishments considerably above the average. Perhaps, living down in the country for the greater part of the year, I am not competent to judge; but I think at least he compares *very favourably* with the gentlemen whom I am in the habit of seeing. I asked her if she meant to marry Arthur. She would not answer. She said something about his being an old friend—as if that had *anything in the world to do with it.* At first I thought that she had merely said No for the pleasure of accepting afterwards; and I knew that in that case the Lieutenant, who is a shrewd young man, and has plenty of courage, would soon *make another trial.* But I was amazed to find so much of seriousness in her decision; and yet she will not say that she means to marry Arthur. Perhaps she is waiting to have an explanation with him first. In that case, I fear Count von Rosen's chances are but very small indeed; for I know how Arthur has *wantonly* traded on Bell's *great generosity* before. Perhaps I may be mistaken; but she would not admit that her decision could be altered. I must say it is *most unfortunate.* Just as we were getting on so nicely and enjoying ourselves so much—and just as we were getting near to the Lake country that Bell so much delights in—everything is spoiled by this unhappy event, for which Bell can give no *adequate reason* whatever. It is a great pity that one who shall be nameless—but who looks pretty fairly after his own comfort—did not *absolutely forbid* Arthur to come vexing us in this way by driving over to our route. If Dr. Ashburton had had any proper control over the boy, he would have kept him to his studies in the Temple, instead of allowing him to risk the breaking of his neck by driving wildly about the country in a dog-cart."]

CHAPTER IV.

THE WHITE OWLS OF GARSTANG.

"As she fled fast through sun and shade,
The happy winds upon her played,
Blowing the ringlet from the braid:
She looked so lovely, as she swayed
The rein with dainty finger-tips,
A man had given all other bliss,
And all his worldly wealth for this,
To waste his whole heart in one kiss
Upon her perfect lips."

THIS state of affairs could not last.

"Look here," I say to Queen Titania, "we must cut the Lieutenant adrift."

"As you please," she remarks, with a sudden coldness coming over her manner.

"Why should we be embarrassed by the freaks of these two young creatures? All the sunshine has gone out of the party since Bell has begun to sit mute and constrained—her only wish apparently being to show a superhuman courtesy to this perplexing young Prussian."

"You very quickly throw over anyone who interferes with your own comfort," says my Lady, calmly.

"I miss my morning ballad. When one reaches a certain age, one expects to be studied and tended—except by one's wife."

"Well," says Tita, driven to desperation by this

picture of von Rosen's departure, "I warned you at our setting-out that these two would fall in love with each other and cause us a great deal of trouble."

Who can say that this little woman is wanting in courage? The audacity with which she made this statement was marvellous. She never flinched; and the brown, clear, true eyes looked as bravely unconscious as if she had been announcing her faith in the multiplication table. There was no use in arguing the point. How could you seek to thwart or influence the firm belief that shone clearly and steadily under the soft eyelashes?

"Come," I say to her, "is von Rosen to go; or is he to hang on in hope of altering Bell's decision? I fancy the young man would himself prefer to leave us —I don't think he is in a comfortable position."

My Lady appeared a trifle embarrassed—was there some dark secret between these two women?

"A young man," she says, with a little hesitation, "is the best judge of his own chances. I have asked Bell; and I really can't quite make her out. Still—you know—a girl sometimes is in a manner frightened into saying 'No,' the first time she is asked—and there might be——"

She stopped.

"You think the Lieutenant should ask her again?"

"No, *I* don't," says Tita, hastily; "but it is impossible to say—she had nothing to urge against

Count von Rosen—only that Arthur would consider himself unjustly treated——"

"So—ho! Is that the reason?"

"No, no, no!" cries the small woman, in an agony of fright. "Don't you go and put any wrong notions into the young man's head——"

"Madam," I say to her, "recollect yourself. So far from wishing to interfere in the affairs of these two young people, I should like to bundle them both back to London, that we might continue our journey in peace. As for the Lieutenant's again proposing to marry Bell, I consider that a man who twice asks a woman to become his wife, forgets the dignity of his sex."

Tita looks up—with the most beautifully innocent smile in her eyes—and says sweetly,—

"You did yourself."

"That was different."

"Yes, I daresay."

"I knew your heart would have broken if I hadn't."

"Oh!" she says, with her eyes grown appalled.

"In fact, it was my native generosity that prompted me to ask you a second time; for I perceived that you were about to ask me."

"How many more?" she asks; but I cannot make out what mysterious things she is secretly counting up.

"But no matter. There is little use in recalling

these bygone mistakes. Justice is satisfied when a fool repents him of his folly."

At this moment Bell enters the room. She goes up to Tita, and takes both her hands.

"You are laughing, in a perplexed way. You must have been quarrelling. What shall we do to him?"

"The falling out of faithful friends is generally made up with a kiss, Bell," it is remarked.

"But I am not in the quarrel," says Miss Bell, retreating to the window; and here there is a rumble of wheels outside, and the phaeton stands at the door.

"You two must get up in front," says Tita, as we go out into the white glare of Ormskirk. "I can watch you better there."

By this dexterous manœuvre Bell and the Lieutenant were again separated. The young lady was never loth to sit in front—under whatever surveillance it placed her; for she liked driving. On this cool morning—that promised a warmer day, after the wind had carried away the white fleece of cloud that stretched over the sky—she pulled on her gloves with great alacrity, and, having got into her seat, assumed the management of the reins as a matter of course.

"Gently!" I say to her, as Castor and Pollux make a plunge forward into the narrow thoroughfare. A handbarrow is jutting out from the pavement. She

gives a jerk to the left rein, but it is too late; one of our wheels just touches the end of the barrow, and over it goes—not with any great crash, however.

"Go on," says the Lieutenant, from behind, with admirable coolness. "There is no harm done—and there is no one in charge of that thing. When he comes, he will pick it up."

"Very pretty conduct," remarks my Lady, as we get out among the green fields and meadows again, "injuring some poor man's property, and quietly driving away without even offering compensation."

"It was Bell who did it," I say.

"As usual. The old story repeated from the days of Eden downward. The woman thou gavest me—of course, it is she who must bear the blame."

"Madam," I reply, "your knowledge of Scripture is astounding. Who was the first Attorney-General in the Bible?"

"Find out," says Tita; and the Lieutenant bursts into a roar of laughter, as if that were a pretty repartee.

"And where do we stop to-night?" says our North-country Maid, looking away along the green valley which is watered by the pretty Eller Brook.

"Garstang, on the river of Wyre."

"And to-morrow we shall really be in Westmoreland?"

"To-morrow we shall really be in Westmoreland.

Wo-ho! my beauties! Why, Bell, if you try to leap across Lancashire at a bound like that, you'll have us in a canal, or transfixed on a telegraph-post."

"I did not intend it," says Bell, "but they are as anxious as I am to get north, and they break into a gallop on no provocation whatever."

Indeed, the whole nature of this mad girl seemed to have a sort of resemblance to a magnetic needle—it was continuously turning to the North Pole, and that in a tremulous, undecided fashion, as if, with all her longing, she did not quite like to let people know. But at this moment she forgot that we were listening. It was really herself she was delighting with her talk about deep valleys, and brown streams, and the scent of peat-smoke in the air of an evening. All the time she was looking away up to the horizon to see whether she could not make out some lines of blue mountains, until Tita suddenly said—

"My dear!"

"Meaning me, ma'am?"

"No, I mean Bell. Pray keep a firmer hand on the horses—if a train were to come sharply by at present—and you see the road runs parallel with the railway-line for an immense distance."

"And so should we," says Bell lightly. "There is no danger. The poor animals wouldn't do anything wicked at such a time, just when they are getting near to a long rest."

Under Bell's guidance we do not lose much time by the way. The road leaves the neighbourhood of the railway. We drive past the great park of Rufford Hall. The wind blows across to us from the Irish Sea; and at the small village of Much Hoole, where the Lieutenant insists on giving the horses a little meal and water as a sort of soothing draught, we come in sight of the long red line of the Ribble, widening out into a sandy channel as it nears the ocean. Bell catches a glimpse of the smoke of a steamer; and the vague knowledge that the plain of salt water is not far away seems to refresh us all, as we plunge once more into the green and wooded country, by Longton, Hutton, and Howick.

"What is the greatest wish of your life, Bell?" I ask, knowing that she is dreaming of living somewhere along the coast of these islands.

"To see Mamma pleased," says Bell, quite prettily, just as if she were before a schoolmistress.

"You ask for the impossible. Tita's dream of earthly bliss is to have the cross in our little church turned to a crucifix; and it will never be realized. I think she would rather have that than be made a Duchess."

"I do miss that dear little church," says Tita, taking no heed of the charge preferred against her. "There is no feeling of homeliness about the churches we go into up here. You know that you are a stranger, and

all the people are strangers, and you are not accustomed to the clergyman's voice."

"The fact is," I tell her, "you lose the sense of proprietorship which pleases you down at home. There, the church is your own. You set out on a quiet Sunday morning—you know all the people coming through the fields and along the roads—and you have an eye on them, to mark the absentees. There is a family gathering in the churchyard, and a universal shaking of hands—you are pleased that all the people are coming to your church. You go in—the evergreens everywhere about you put there yourself. The tall white lilies on the altar you presented to the Vicar; though I paid for them. Bell sits down to the organ—probably thinking that her new boots may slip on one of the pedals and produce a discord in the bass—and you know that your family is providing the music too. The Vicar and his wife dined with you the night before—you are in secret league with them. You know all the people—Lord ——'s butler, who is the most venerable person in the place—that squint-eyed publican, who thrashes his wife on the Saturday so that she can't come on the Sunday—all the other various pensioners you have, who you vainly think are being taught to be independent and economical—and a lot of small boys in knickerbockers and shiny heads of hair, and pretty young ladies with sailors' hats, blue ribbons, white jackets, and big wistful eyes. You are

the presiding genius of the place; and when Bell begins the music—and the sunlight comes through the small and yellow windows in the southern aisle—and when you see the light shining on the mural tablets, with the coloured coats-of-arms above—you ask yourself what other place could produce this feeling of homely satisfaction, and what fashionable London church, with all its money, could manufacture these ancient blocks of marble—until you think you could spend all your own money, and all your husband's too, in making the small building a sort of ecclesiastical museum."

"I hope," says Tita, with great severity, "I do not go into church with any such thoughts. It is an auctioneer's view of a morning service."

"It is the business of an auctioneer, my dear creature, to estimate the actual value of articles. But I forgot one thing. After you have contemplated the church with profound satisfaction—just as if those old knights and baronets had died in order to adorn the walls for you—your eye wanders up to the altar. It is a pretty altar-cloth—goodness knows how much time you and Bell spent over it. The flowers on the altar are also beautiful—or ought to be, considering the price that Benson charges for them. But that plain gilt cross, with the three jewels in it—that is rather a blot, is it not?"

"Why don't you go to the zinc chapel?" says Tita, with some contempt.

"I would if I dared."

"Who prevents you? I am sure it is not I. I would much rather you went there, than come to church, merely to calculate the cost of every bit of fern or yew that is placed on the walls, and to complain of the introduction into the sermon of doctrines which you can't understand."

"May I go to chapel, please?"

"Certainly. But you are a good deal fonder of going up to Mickleham Downs than to either church or chapel."

"Will you come to chapel, Bell?"

"I am not going to interfere," says Bell, with philosophical indifference, and paying much more attention to her horses.

"I should be sorry to go," I observe, calmly, "for I had half resolved to ask Mr. Lestrange to let me put in yellow glass in those two windows that are at present white."

"Oh, will you really?" cries Queen Tita, in a piteously eager tone, and quite forgetting all her war of words.

Well, I promise, somewhat sadly. It is not the cost of it that is the matter. But on those Sunday mornings when the sunlight is flooding the church with a solemn glow of yellow, it is something to turn

to the two white windows, and there, through the diamond panes, you can see the sunlight shimmering on the breezy branches of an ash-tree. This little glimpse of the bright and glowing world outside—when our Vicar, who, it must be confessed, is not always in a happy mood, happens to be rather drowsy and even depressing in the monotony of his commonplaceness—but perhaps it will be better to say nothing more on this point.

Why the people of the flourishing town of Preston do not bridge the Ribble in a line running parallel with their chief thoroughfare and the road leading up from Harwich, is inexplicable. A pleasure party need not mind, for the drive is pleasant enough; but business folks might be tempted to use bad language over such an unnecessary injury. The road makes a long double along the two banks of the river, the most westerly bridge forming the end of the loop. First you drive down the left bank of the stream, over fine green meadows, then you cross the bridge, and drive back along the right bank, between avenues of young trees. Perhaps the notion is to give you as much as possible of the green and pleasant surroundings of Preston, before letting you plunge into the streets of the town.

Now, I do not know how it was that from the moment of our entering Preston a vague feeling of satisfaction and hope seemed to get possession of our small party. We had started in the morning under

somewhat embarrassing and awkward conditions, not likely to provoke high spirits; but now we seemed to have a nebulous impression that the end of our troubles had come. Was it because we had reached the last of the large manufacturing towns on our journey, and that we should meet with no more of them? Or was it because of that promise of Queen Titania?—for that kindly little woman, when she is pleased, has a wonderful power of conveying her gladness to others, and has been known to sweeten a heavy dinner-party as a bunch of woodruff will sweeten a lumber-room. Or was it that we knew, in approaching Kendal, we should probably come to a final settlement of all our difficulties, and have thereafter peace?

As we were walking, after luncheon, through the spacious public gardens that overlook the Ribble, the Lieutenant drew me aside, and said—

"My good friend, here is a favour I will ask of you. We come to-night to Garstang, yes?"

"Yes, we shall reach Garstang to-night."

"A town or a village?"

"I don't know. Probably a village."

"I did hope it was not a town. Well, this is what I ask. You will endeavour to take away Madame for a few moments—if we are out walking, you know—and you will let me say a few words to Mademoiselle by herself."

"I thought all your anxiety was to avoid her."

"There is something I must say to her."

"All right; I will do what you ask, on condition you do not persecute her. When she wishes to rejoin us, you must not prevent her."

"Persecute her? Then you do think I will quarrel with her—and make her very miserable—merely because she will not marry me? You think it will be as it was at Worcester—when that stupid boy from Twickenham did go along the river? Well, all I ask you is to look at these two days. Has there been any quarrel between us? No, it is quite the opposite."

"Then let it remain that way, my dear fellow. One Arthur is bad enough for a girl to manage; but two would probably send her into a convent for life."

And the truth was as the Lieutenant had described it. They had been during these two days more than polite to each other. Somehow, Bell was never done in paying him furtive little attentions, although she spoke to him rarely. That morning she had somewhere got a few wild-flowers; and three tiny bouquets were placed on the breakfast-table. The Lieutenant dared not think that one of them was for him. He apologized to Mademoiselle for taking her seat. Bell said he had not—the bouquet was for him if he cared to have it, she added with a little diffidence. The Lieutenant positively blushed—said nothing—and altogether neglected his own breakfast in offering her things she did not want. The bouquets given to Tita

and her husband were pinned into prominent positions; but no human eye saw anything more of the wild blossoms that Bell had given to von Rosen. Betting on a certainty is considered dishonourable; and so I will not say what odds I would give that these precious flowers were transferred to a book, and that at this moment they could be produced if a certain young man were only willing to reveal their whereabouts.

Everything seemed to favour us on this fine afternoon as we drove away northward again. The road grew excellent, and we knew that we had finally left behind us that deafening causeway that had dinned our ears for days past. Then the cool breeze of the forenoon and mid-day had died down, and a still, warm sunset began to break over the western country, between us and the sea. We could not, of course, get any glimpse of the great plain of water beyond the land; but we knew that this great fire of crimson and yellow was shining down on it too, and on the long curves of the shore.

The western sands could not be much more level than the road that runs up by Broughton and Brockbridge, but it takes one through a sufficiently pleasant country, which is watered by a multitude of brooks and small rivers. It is a rich and well-cultivated country, too; and the far-stretching meadows and copses and fields seemed to grow darker in their green

under that smoke of dusky crimson that had filled the sky. It is true, we were still in Lancashire, and there was still present to us a double line of communication with the manufacturing towns we had now left behind. At certain places the road would run by the side of a railway-line; and then again we would find a canal winding itself like a snake through the grassy meadows. But a sunset is a wonderful smoother-down of these artificial features in a landscape; and when the earth-banks of the railway-line burned crimson under the darkening sky, or when an arm of the canal caught a flush of flame on its glassy surface, the picture was rather helped than otherwise, and we bore the engineers of this favoured land no deadly grudge.

A sunset, by the way, was always favourable to Bell's appearance. It lent to those fine and wavy masses of hair a sort of glory; and the splendid aureole was about all of his sweetheart that the Lieutenant could see, as he sat in the hind seat of the phaeton. Bell wears her hair rather loose when she is out in the country, and greatly likes, indeed, to toss it about as if she were a young lion; so that you may fancy how the warm light of the sunset glowed here and there on those light and silken heaps of golden-brown as we drove along in the quiet evening. Sometimes, indeed, he may have caught the outline of her face as she turned to look over the far landscape; and then, I know, the delicate oval was tinted by the generous

colour of the western skies, so that not alone in the miracle of her hair did she look like some transfigured saint.

Her talk on this evening, however, was far from saintly. It was as worldly as it well could be; for she was confessing to the agony she used to suffer after going home from dinner-parties, balls, and other godless diversions of a like nature.

"I used to dread going up to my room," she said, "for I could get no rest until I had sat down and gone over everything that I had said during the evening. And then all the consequences of my imprudence came rushing down on me until I felt I was scarcely fit to live. What you had been led into saying as a mere piece of merriment now looked terribly like impertinence. Many a time I wrote down on a piece of paper certain things that I resolved to go the next day and make an apology for to the old ladies whom I am sure I had offended. But the next morning, things began to look a little better. A little reassurance came with the briskness of the day; and I used to convince myself that nobody would remember the heedless sayings that had been provoked by the general light talk and merriment. I absolved myself for that day; and promised, and vowed, and made the most desperate resolutions never, never to be thoughtless in the future, but always to watch every word I had to say."

"And in the evening," continued my Lady, "you went out to another dance, and enjoyed yourself the same, and said as many wild things as usual, and went home again to do penance. It is quite natural, Bell. Most girls go through that terrible half-hour of reaction, until they grow to be women——"

"And then," it is remarked, "they have never anything to be sorry about; for they are always circumspect, self-possessed, and sure about what they mean to say. They never have to spend a dreadful half-hour in trying to recollect mistakes and follies."

"As for gentlemen," remarked Titania sweetly, "I have heard that their evil half-hour is during the process of dressing, when they endeavour to recall the speech they made at the public dinner of the night before, and wonder how they could have been so stupid as to order a lot of champagne to oblige a friend just gone into that business, and are not very sure how many people they invited to dinner on the following Friday. Count von Rosen——"

"Yes, Madame."

"When you observe a husband whistling while his wife is talking, what do you think?"

"That she is saying something he would rather not hear," replies the Lieutenant, gravely.

"And is not that a confession that what she says is true?"

"Yes, Madame," says the Lieutenant, boldly.

"My dear," I say to her, "your brain has been turned by the last sporting novel you have read. You are a victim of cerebral inflammation. When you pride yourself on your researches into the ways and habits of the sex which you affect to despise, don't take that sort of farthing-candle to guide you. As for myself, our young friend from Prussia would scarcely credit the time I spend in helping you to nail up brackens and larch and ivy in that wretched little church; and if he knew the trouble I have to keep Bell's accounts straight —when she is reckoning up what the process of producing paupers in our neighbourhood costs us—why, he would look upon you as an unprincipled calumniator."

"Mamma herself is scarcely so big as those two words put together," says Bell; but Mamma is laughing all this time, quite pleased to see that she has raised a storm in a tea-cup by her ungracious and unwarranted assault.

In the last red rays of the sun we have got on to a small elevation. Before us, the road dips down and crosses the canal; then it makes a twist again and crosses the Wyre; and up in that corner are the scattered gables of Garstang. As we pass over the river, it is running cold and dark between its green banks; and the sunset is finally drawing down to the west as we drive into the silent village, and up to the doorstep of the Royal Oak.

'Tis a quaint and ancient hostelry. For aught we

know, the Earl of Derby's soldiers may have walked over hither for a draught of beer when they were garrisoning Greenhalgh Castle over there; and when the brave Countess, away down at Latham, was herself fixing up the royal standard on the tower of the castle as Mr. Leslie's picture shows us—and bidding defiance to the Parliamentary troops. When you tell that story to Queen Titania, you can see her gentle face grow pale with pride and admiration; for did not the gallant Countess send out word to Fairfax that she would defend the place until she lost her honour or her life, for that she had not forgotten what she owed to the Church of England, to her prince, and to her lord? My Lady looks as if she, too, could have sent that message; only that she would have stopped at the Church of England and gone no further.

When we come out again, the sunset has gone, and a wonderful pale green twilight lies over the land. We go forth from the old-fashioned streets, and find ourselves by the banks of the clear running river. A pale metallic light shines along its surface; and as we walk along between the meadows and the picturesque banks —where there is an abundance of the mighty burdock-leaves that are beloved of painters—an occasional splash is heard, whether of a rat or a trout no one can say. Somehow the Lieutenant has drawn Bell away from us. In the clear twilight we can see their figures sharp and black on the dark green slope beside

the stream. Queen Tita looks rather wistfully at them; and is, perhaps, thinking of days long gone by when she, too, knew the value of silence on a beautiful evening, by the side of a river.

"I hope it is not wrong," says my Lady, in a low voice, "but I confess I should like to see the Lieutenant marry our Bell."

"Wrong? No. It is only the absent who are in the wrong—Arthur, for example, who is perhaps at Kendal, at this moment, waiting for us."

"We cannot all be satisfied in this world," remarks Tita, profoundly; "and as one of these two alone can marry Bell, I do hope it may be the Lieutenant, in spite of what she says. I think it would be very pleasant for all of us. What nice neighbours they would be for us; for I know Bell would prefer to live down near us in Surrey, and the Lieutenant can have no particular preference for any place in England."

"A nice holiday-time we should have of it, with these two idle creatures living close by and making continual proposals to go away somewhere."

"Bell would not be idle."

"She must give up her painting if she marries."

"She won't give it up altogether, I hope; and then there is her music, even if she had no household duties to occupy her time: and I know she will make an active and thrifty housewife. Indeed, the only

idler will be the Lieutenant, and he can become a Captain of Volunteers."

And yet she says she never lays plans!—that she has no wish to interfere between Arthur and von Rosen!—that she would rather see Bell relieved from the persecutions of both of them! She had already mapped out the whole affair; and her content was so great that a beautiful gladness and softness lay in her eyes, and she began to prattle about the two boys at school, and all she meant to take home to them; and, indeed, if she had been at home, she would have gone to the piano and sung to herself some low and gentle melody, as soft and as musical as the crooning of a wood-pigeon hid away among trees.

Then she said, "How odd that Bell should have begun to talk about these unfortunate slips of the tongue that haunt you afterwards. All these two days I haven't been able to get rid of the remembrance of that terrible mistake I made in speaking of Count von Rosen and Bell as already married. But who knows? there may be a Providence in such things."

"The Providence that lies in blunders of speech must be rather erratic; but it is no wonder you spoke by mischance of Bell's marrying the Lieutenant, for you think of nothing else."

"But don't you think it would be a very good thing?"

"What I think of it is a different matter. What will Arthur think of it?"

"The whole world can't be expected to move round merely to please Arthur," says my Lady, with some asperity. "The fact is, those young men are so foolish that they never reflect that a girl can't marry two of them. They are always falling in love with a girl who has a suitor already, and then she is put to the annoyance of refusing one of them, and that one considers her a monster."

"Well, if anyone is open to that charge in the present case, it certainly is not Arthur."

My Lady did not answer. She was regarding with a tender glance those two young folks strolling through the meadows before us. What were they saying to each other? Would Bell relent? The time was propitious—in the quiet of this pale, clear evening, with a star or two beginning to twinkle, and the moon about to creep up from behind the eastern woods. It was a time for lovers to make confessions, and give tender pledges. None of us seemed to think of that wretched youth who was blindly driving through England in a dog-cart, and torturing himself in the horrible solitude of inns. Unhappy Arthur!

For mere courtesy's sake, these two drew near to us again. We looked at them. Bell turned her face away, and stooped to pick up the white blossom of a campion that lay like a great glow-worm among

the dark herbage. The Lieutenant seemed a little more confident, and he was anxious to be very courteous and friendly towards Tita. That lady was quite demure, and suggested that we might return to the village.

We clambered up a steep place that led from the hollow of the river to a higher plain, and here we found ourselves by the side of the canal. It looked like another river. There were grassy borders to it, and by the side of the path a deep wood descending to the fields beyond. The moon had now arisen, and, on the clear, still water, there were some ripples of gold. Far away, on the other side, the barns and haystacks of a farm-house were visible in the pale glow of the sky.

"What is that?" said Tita, hurriedly, as a large white object sailed silently through the faint moonlight and swept into the wood.

Only an owl. But the sound of her voice had disturbed several of the great birds in the trees, and across the space between the wood and the distant farm-house they fled noiselessly, with a brief reflection of their broad wings falling on the still waters as they passed. We remained there an unconscionable time—leaning on the stone parapet of the bridge, and watching the pale line of the canal, the ripples of the moonlight, the dark wood, and the great and dusky birds that floated about like ghosts in the perfect still-

ness. When we returned to Garstang, the broad square in the centre of the place was glimmering grey in the moonlight, and black shadows had fallen along one side of the street.

"My dear friend," said von Rosen, in an excited and urgent way, as soon as our two companions had gone upstairs to prepare for supper, "I have great news to tell you."

"Bell has accepted you, I suppose," said I—the boy talking as if that were a remarkable phenomenon in the world's history.

"Oh no, nothing so good as that—nothing not near so good as that—but something very good indeed. It is not all finally disposed of—there is at least a little chance—one must wait—but is not this a very great hope?"

"And is that all you obtained by your hour's persuasion?"

"Pfui! You do talk as if it did not matter to a young girl whether she marries one man or marries another."

"I don't think it much matters really."

"Then this is what I tell you——"

But here some light footsteps were heard on the stairs, and the Lieutenant suddenly ceased, and rushed to open the door.

Bell was as rosy as a rose set amid green leaves when she entered, followed by Tita.

"We are very late," said the girl, as if she were rather afraid to hazard that startling and profound observation.

"Madame," said the Lieutenant, "I give you my word this is the best ale we have drunk since we started; it is clear, bright, very bitter, brisk; it is worth a long journey to drink such ale, and I hope your husband, when he writes of our journey, will give our landlady great credit for this very good beer."

I do so willingly; but lest any ingenuous traveller should find the ale of the Royal Oak not quite fulfil the expectations raised by this panegyric, I must remind him that it was pronounced after the Lieutenant had been walking for an hour along the banks of the Wyre, on a beautiful evening, in the company of a very pretty young lady.

We had abolished bézique by this time. It had become too much of a farce. Playing four-handed bézique with partners is a clumsy contrivance; and when we had endeavoured to play it independently, the audacity of the Lieutenant in sacrificing the game to Bell's interests had got beyond a joke. So we had fallen back on whist; and as we made those two ardent young noodles partners, they did their best. It wasn't very good, to tell the truth. The Lieutenant was as bad a whist-player as ever perplexed a partner; but Bell could play a weak suit as well as another. My Lady was rather pleased to find that the Lieutenant

was not a skilful card-player. She was deeply interested in the qualities of the young man whom she regarded in a premature fashion as Bell's future husband. In fact, if she had only known how, she would have examined the young fellows who came about the house—Bell has had a pretty fair show of suitors in her time—as to the condition of the inner side of the thumb. It is a bad sign when that portion of the hand gets rather horny. A man might as well go about with a piece of chalk, marked "Thurston and Co.," in his waistcoat-pocket. But the Lieutenant scarcely knew the difference between a cue and a pump-handle.

We played late. The people of the inn, yielding to our entreaties, had long ago gone to bed. When, at length, my Lady and Bell also retired, the Lieutenant rose from the table, stretched himself up his full length, and said—

"My good friend, I have much of a favour to ask from you. I will repay you for it many times again—I will sit up with you and smoke all night as often as you please, which I think is your great notion of enjoyment. But now, I have a great many things to tell you—and the room is close—let us go away for a walk."

It was only the strong nervous excitement of the young man that was longing for this outburst into the freedom of the cool air. He would have liked, then,

to have started off at a rate of five miles an hour, and walked himself dead with fatigue. He was so anxious about it that at last we took a candle to the front door, got the bolts undone, and then, leaving the candle and the matches where we knew we should find them, we went out into the night.

By this time the moon had got well down into the south-west; but there was still sufficient light to show us the cottages, the roads, and the trees. The night air was fresh and cool. As we started off on our vague ramble, a cock crew, and the sound seemed to startle the deep sleep of the landscape. We crossed over the canal-bridge, and plunged boldly out into the still country, whither we knew not.

Then he told me all the story; beginning with the half-forgotten legend of Fräulein Fallersleben. I had had no idea that this practical and hard-headed young Uhlan had been so deeply struck on either occasion; but now at times there seemed to be a wild cry of ignorance in his confessions, as if he knew not what had happened to him, and what great mystery of life he was battling with. He described it as resembling somehow the unutterable sadness caused by the sudden coming of the Spring—when, amid all the glory and wonder and delight of this new thing, a vague unrest and longing takes possession of the heart and will not be satisfied. All his life had been changed since his coming to England—turned in an-

other direction, and made to depend for any value that might be left in it on a single chance. When he spoke of Bell perhaps marrying him, all the wild and beautiful possibilities of the future seemed to stretch out before him, until he was fairly at a loss for words. When he spoke of her finally going away from him, it was as of something he could not quite understand. It would alter all his life—how, he did not know; and the new and wonderful consciousness that by such a circumstance the world would grow all different to him seemed to him a mystery beyond explication. He only knew that this strange thing had occurred; that it had brought home to him once more the old puzzles about life that had made him wonder as a boy; that he was drifting on to an irrevocable fate, now that the final decision was near.

He talked rapidly, earnestly, heeding little the blunders and repetitions into which he constantly fell: and not all the vesuvians in the world could have kept his cigar alight. He did not walk very fast; but he cut at the weeds and at the hedges with his stick, and doubtless startled with his blows many a sparrow and wren sleeping peacefully among the leaves. I cannot tell you a tithe of what he said. The story seemed as inexhaustible as the nebulous mystery that he was obviously trying to resolve as it hung around him in impalpable folds. When he came to the actual question whether Bell had given him to understand

that she might reconsider her decision, he was more reticent. He would not reveal what she had said. But there was no pride or self-looking in the anxiety about the result which he frankly expressed; and it is probable that if Bell had heard him then, she would have learned more of his nature and sentiments than during any hour's stroll under the supervision of her guardians.

When at length we turned, a shock of wonder struck upon our eyes. The day had begun to break in the east, and a cold wind was stirring. As yet, there was only a faint light in the dark sky; but by and by a strange, clear whiteness rose up from behind the still landscape, and then a wild, cold, yellow radiance, against which the tall poplars looked intensely black, overspread the far regions of the east. Wan and unearthly seemed that metallic glare, even when a pale glimmer of red ran up and through it; and, as yet, it looked like the sunrise of some other world, for neither man nor beast was awake to greet it; and all the woods were as silent as the grave. When we got back to Garstang, the wind came chill along the grey stones, the birds were singing, and the glow of the sunrise was creeping over the chimneys and slates of the sleeping houses. We left this wonderful light outside; plunged into the warm and gloomy passage of the inn; and presently tumbled, tired and shivering, into bed.

CHAPTER V.

CHLOE'S GARLAND.

"The pride of every grove I chose,
The violet sweet and lily fair,
The dappled pink and blushing rose,
To deck my charming Chloe's hair.

"At morn the nymph vouchsafed to place
Upon her brow the various wreath;
The flowers less blooming than her face,
The scent less fragrant than her breath.

"The flowers she wore along the day,
And every nymph and shepherd said,
That in her hair they looked more gay
Than glowing in their native bed."

Is there any blue half so pure and deep, and tender, as that of the large crane's-bill, the *Geranium pratense* of the botanists? When Bell saw the beautiful, rich-coloured blossoms in the tall hedge-rows, she declared we were already in the North Country, and must needs descend from the phaeton to gather some of the wild-flowers; and lo! all around there was such a profusion that she stood bewildered before them. Everywhere about were the white stars of the stitchwort glimmering among the green of the goose-grass. The clear red blossoms of the campion shone here and there; and the viscid petals of the Ragged Robin glimmered a bright crimson as they straggled through the thorny branches of the hawthorn. Here, too, was the beautiful hare-bell—the real "blue-bell of Scot-

land"—with its slender stem and its pellucid colour; and here was its bigger and coarser relative, the great hedge campanula, with its massive bells of azure, and its succulent stalk. There were yellow masses of snapdragon; and an abundance of white and pink roses sweetening the air; and all the thousand wonders of a luxuriant vegetation. The Lieutenant immediately jumped down. He harried the hedges as if they had been a province of the enemy's country, and he in quest of forage and food. The delight of Bell in these wild-flowers was extravagant, and when he had gathered for her every variety of hue that he could see, she chose a few of the blossoms and twisted them, with a laugh of light pleasure, into the breezy masses of her hair. Could a greater compliment have been paid him?

If it was not really the North-country which Bell so longed to enter, it was on the confines of it, and already many premonitory signs were visible. These tall hedge-rows, with their profusion of wild-flowers, were a wonder. We crossed dark-brown streams, the picturesque banks of which were smothered in every sort of bush and herb and plant. At last, a breath of the morning air brings us a strange, new scent, that is far more grateful than that of any wreath of flowers, and at the same moment both Bell and Tita call out—

"Oh, there is the peat-smoke at last!"

Peat-smoke it is, and presently we come upon the cottages which are sending abroad this fragrance into the air. They are hidden down in a dell by the side of a small river, and they are surrounded by low and thick elder-trees. Bell is driving. She will not even stop to look at this picturesque little nook: it is but an outpost, and the promised land is nigh.

The day, meanwhile, is grey and showery; but sometimes a sudden burst of sunshine springs down on the far, flat landscape, and causes it to shine in the distance. We pass by many a stately Hall and noble Park —Bell, with the wild-flowers in her hair, still driving until we reach the top of a certain height, and find a great prospect lying before us. The windy day has cleared away the light clouds in the west; and there, under a belt of blue sky, lies a glimmer of the sea. The plain of the landscape leading down to it is divided by the estuary of the Lune; and as you trace the course of the river, up through the country that lies grey under the grey portion of the heavens, some tall buildings are seen in the distance, and a fortress upon a height resembling some smaller Edinburgh Castle. We drive on through the gusty day—the tail of a shower sometimes overtaking us from the south and causing a hurried clamour for waterproofs, which have immediately to be set aside as the sun bursts forth again, and then we dive into a clean, bright, picturesque town, and find ourselves in front of the King's Arms at Lancaster.

Bell has taken the flowers from her hair, in nearing the abodes of men; but she has placed them tenderly by the side of the bouquet that the Lieutenant gathered for her, and now she gently asks a waiter for a tumbler of water, into which the blossoms are put. The Lieutenant watches her every movement as anxiously as ever a Roman watched the skimmings and dippings of the bird whose flight was to predict ruin or fortune to him. He had no opportunities to lose. Time was pressing on. That night we were to reach Kendal; and there the enemy was lying in wait.

Bell, at least, did not seem much to fear that meeting with Arthur. When she spoke of him to Tita, she was grave and thoughtful; but when she spoke of Westmoreland, there was no qualification of her unbounded hope and delight. She would scarce look at Lancaster; although, when we went up to the castle, and had a walk round to admire the magnificent view from the walls, an unwonted stir in front of the great gate told us that something unusual had happened. The Lieutenant went down and mixed with the crowd. We saw him—a head and shoulders taller than the assemblage of men and women—speaking now to one and now to another; and then at length he came back.

"Madame," he says, "there is something wonderful to be seen in the castle. All these people are pressing to get in."

"Is it some soup plate of Henry the Eighth that

has been disinterred?" she asks, with a slight show of scorn. Indeed, she seldom loses an opportunity of sticking another needle into her mental image of that poor monarch.

"Oh no, it is something much more interesting. It is a murderer."

"A murderer!"

"Yes, Madame, but you need not feel alarmed. He is caged—he will not bite. All these good people are going in to look at him."

"I would not look at the horrid creature for worlds."

"He is not a monster of iniquity," I tell her. "On the contrary, he is a harmless creature, and deserves your pity. All he did was to kill his wife."

"And I suppose they will punish him with three months' imprisonment," says Queen Tita; "whereas they would give him seven years if he had stolen a purse with half-a-crown in it."

"Naturally. I consider three months a great deal too much, however. Doubtless she contradicted him."

"But it is not true, Tita," says Bell; "none of us knew that the murderer was in the castle until this moment. How can you believe that he killed his wife?"

"There may be a secret sympathy between these two," says my Lady, with a demure laugh in her eyes, "which establishes a communication between them which we don't understand. You know the theory of

brain-waves. But it is hard that the one should be within the prison and the other without."

"Yes, it's very hard for the one without. The one inside the prison has got rid of his torment and escaped into comparative quiet."

She is a dutiful wife. She never retorts—when she hasn't a retort ready. She takes my arm just as if nothing had happened, and we go down from the castle square into the town. And behold! as we enter the grey thoroughfare, a wonderful sight comes into view. Down the far white street, where occasional glimpses of sunlight are blown across by the wind, a gorgeous procession is seen to advance—glittering in silver, and coloured plumes, and all the pomp and circumstance of a tournament. There is a cry of amazement throughout Lancaster; and from all points of the compass people hurry up. It is just two; and men from the factories, flocking out for their dinner, stand amazed on the pavement. The procession comes along through the shadow and the sunlight like some gleaming and gigantic serpent with scales of silver and gold. There are noble knights, dressed in complete armour, and seated on splendid chargers. They bring with them spears, and banners, and other accessories of war; and their horses are shining with the magnificence of their trappings. There are ladies wearing the historical costumes which are familiar to us in picture galleries, and they are seated on cream-white palfreys, with flowing

manes, and tails that sweep the ground. Then a resplendent palanquin appears in view, drawn by six yellow horses, and waving and trembling with plumes of pink and white. Inside this great and gilded carriage, the Queen of Beauty sits enthroned, attended by ladies whose trains of silk and satin shine like the neck of a dove. And the while our eyes are still dazzled with the glory of this slowly passing pageant, the end of it appears in the shape of a smart and natty little trap, driven by the proprietor of the circus in plain clothes. The anti-climax is too much. The crowd regard this wretched fellow with disdain. When a historical play is produced, and we are introduced to the majesty of war, and even shown the king's tent on the battle-field, the common sutler is hidden out of sight. This wretched man's obtrusion of himself was properly resented; for the spectacle of the brilliant procession coming along the grey and white thoroughfares, with a breezy sky overshadowing or lighting it up, was sufficiently imposing, and ought not to have been destroyed by the vanity of a person in plain clothes who wanted to let us know that he was the owner of all this splendour, and who thought he ought to come last, as Noah did on going into the Ark.

"Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds!"—that was the wish I knew lay deep down in Bell's heart as we went away from Lancaster. If Castor and Pollux did their work gallantly, we should sleep to-night in Kendal,

and thereafter there would be abundant rest. This last day's journey consisted of thirty-three miles—considerably above our average day's distance—and we had accordingly cut it up into three portions. From Garstang to Lancaster is eleven miles; from Lancaster to Burton is eleven miles; from Burton to Kendal is eleven miles. Now Burton is in Westmoreland; and, once within her own county, Bell knew she was at home.

'Twas a perilous sort of day in which to approach the region of the Northern Lakes. In the best of weather, the great mass of mountains that stand on the margin of the sea ready to condense any moist vapours that may float in from the west and south, play sudden tricks sometimes and drown the holiday-makers whom the sun has drawn out of the cottages, houses, and hotels up in the deep valleys. But here there were abundant clouds racing and chasing each other like the folks who sped over Cannobie Lea to overtake the bride of young Lochinvar; and now and again the wind would drive down on us the flying fringes of one of these masses of vapour, producing a temporary fear. Bell cared least for these premonitions. She would not even cover herself with a cloak. Many a time we could see raindrops glimmering in her brown hair and dripping from the flowers that she had again twisted in the folds; but she sat erect and glad, with a fine colour in her face that the wet breeze only heightened. When we got up to Slyne and Bolton-le-Sands, and came in

sight of the long sweep of Morecambe Bay, she paid no attention to the fact that all along the far margin of the sea the clouds had melted into a white belt of rain. It was enough for her that the sun was out there too; sometimes striking with a pale silvery light on the plain of the sea, sometimes throwing a stronger colour on the long curve of level sand. A wetter or windier sight never met the view of an apprehensive traveller than that great stretch of sea and sky. The glimmer of the sun only made the moisture in the air more apparent as the grey clouds were sent flying up from the south-west. We could not tell whether the sea was breaking white or not; but the fierce blowing of the wind was apparent in the hurrying trails of cloud and the rapidly shifting shafts of sunlight that now and again shot down on the sands.

"Bell," said Tita, with a little anxiety, "you used to pride yourself on being able to forecast the weather, when you lived up among the hills. Don't you think we shall have a wet afternoon?—and we have nearly twenty miles to go yet."

The girl laughed.

"Mademoiselle acknowledges we shall have a little rain," said the Lieutenant, with a grim smile. If Bell was good at studying the appearances of the sky, he had acquired some skill in reading the language of her eloquent face.

"Why," says one of the party, "a deaf man down

in a coal-pit could tell what sort of afternoon we shall have. The wind is driving the clouds up. The hills are stopping them on the way. When we enter Westmoreland we shall find the whole forces of the rain-fiends drawn out in array against us. But that is nothing to Bell, so long as we enter Westmoreland."

"Ah, you shall see," remarks Bell; "we may have a little rain this evening."

"Yes, that is very likely," said the Lieutenant, who seemed greatly tickled by this frank admission.

"But to-morrow, if this strong wind keeps up all night, would you be astonished to find Kendal with its stone houses all shining white in the sun?"

"Yes, I should be astonished."

"You must not provoke the prophetess," says my Lady, who is rather nervous about rainy weather, "or she will turn round on you, and predict all sorts of evil."

We could not exactly tell when we crossed the border line of Westmoreland, or doubtless Bell would have jumped down from the phaeton to kneel and kiss her native soil; but at all events when we reached the curious little village of Burton we knew we were then in Westmoreland, and Bell ushered us into the ancient hostelry of the Royal Oak as if she had been the proprietress of that and all the surrounding country. In former days Burton was doubtless a place of importance, when the stage-coaches stopped here before

plunging into the wild mountain-country; and in the inn, which remains pretty much what it was in the last generation, were abundant relics of the past. When the Lieutenant and I returned from the stables to the old-fashioned little parlour and museum of the place, we found Bell endeavouring to get some quivering, trembling, jangling notes out of the piano, that was doubtless a fine piece of furniture at one time. A piece of yellow ivory informed the beholder that this venerable instrument had been made by "Thomas Tomkison, Dean Street, Soho, Manufacturer to his Royal Highness the Prince Regent." And what was this that Bell was hammering out?

"The standard on the braes o' Mar
Is up and streaming rarely!
The gathering pipe on Lochnagar
Is sounding lang and clearly!
The Highlandmen, from hill and glen,
In martial hue, wi' bonnets blue,
Wi' belted plaids and burnished blades,
Are coming late and early."

How the faded old instrument groaned and quivered as if it were struggling to get up some martial sentiment of its half-forgotten youth! It did its best to pant after that rapid and stirring air, and laboured and jangled in a pathetic fashion through the chords. It seemed like some poor old pensioner, decrepit and feeble-eyed, who sees a regiment passing with their band playing, and who tries to straighten himself up as he hears the tread of the men, and would fain step

out to the sound of the music, but that his thin legs tremble beneath him. The wretched old piano struggled hard to keep up with the Gathering of the Clans as they hastened on to the braes o' Mar:—

"Wha wouldna join our noble chief,
The Drummond and Glengarry;
Macgregor, Murray, Rollo, Keith,
Panmure and gallant Harry!
Macdonald's men,
Clan Ranald's men,
M'Kenzie's men,
MacGilvray's men,
Strathallan's men
The Lowland men
Of Callander and Airlie!"

until my Lady put her hand gently on Bell's shoulder, and said—

"My dear, this is worse than eating green apples."

Bell shut down the lid.

"It is time for this old thing to be quiet," she said. "The people who sang with it when it was in its prime, they cannot sing any more now, and it has earned its rest."

Bell uttered these melancholy words as she turned to look out of the window. It was rather a gloomy afternoon. There was less wind visible in the motion of the clouds, but in place of the flying and hurrying masses of vapour, an ominous pall of grey was visible, and the main thoroughfare of Burton-in-Kendal was gradually growing moister under a slow rain. Suddenly the girl said—

"Is it possible for Arthur to have reached Kendal?"

The Lieutenant looked up, with something of a frown on his face.

"Yes," I say to her, "if he keeps up the pace with which he started. Thirty miles a day in a light dog-cart will not seriously damage the Major's cob, if only he gets a day's rest now and again."

"Then perhaps Arthur may be coming along this road just now?"

"He may; but it is hardly likely. He would come over by Kirkby Lonsdale."

"I think we should be none the worse for his company, if he were to arrive," said Tita, with a little apprehension, "for it will be dark long before we get to Kendal—and on such a night, too, as we are likely to have."

"Then let us start at once, Madame," said the Lieutenant. "The horses will be ready to be put in harness now, I think; and they must have as much time for the rest of the journey as we can give them. Then the waterproofs—I will have them all taken out, and the rugs. We shall want much more than we have, I can assure you of that. And the lamps—we shall want them too."

The Lieutenant walked off to the stables with these weighty affairs of state possessing his mind. He was as anxious to preserve these two women from suffering

a shower of rain as if he thought they were made of bride's-cake. Out in the yard we found him planning the disposal of the rugs with the eye of a practised campaigner, and taking every boy and man in the place into his confidence. Whatever embarrassment his imperfect English might cause him in a drawing-room, there was no need to guard his speech in a stable-yard. But sometimes our Uhlan was puzzled. What could he make, for example, of the following sentence, addressed to him by a worthy ostler at Garstang: "*Yaas, an ah gied'n a aff booket o' chilled watter after ah'd weshen 'n?*" Of the relations of the Lieutenant with the people whom he thus casually encountered, it may be said generally that he was "hail, fellow, well met," with any man who seemed of a frank and communicable disposition. With a good-natured landlord or groom, he would stand for any length of time talking about horses, their food, their ways, and the best methods of doctoring them. But when he encountered a sulky ostler, the unfortunate man had an evil time of it. His temper was not likely to be improved by the presence of this lounging young soldier, who stood whistling at the door of the stable and watching that every bit of the grooming was performed to a nicety, who examined the quality of the oats, and was not content with the hay, and who calmly stood by with his cigar in his mouth until he had seen the animals eat every grain of corn that had

been put in the manger. The bad temper, by the way, was not always on the side of the ostler.

A vague proposition that we should remain at Burton for that night was unanimously rejected. Come what might, we should start in Kendal with a clear day before us; and what mattered this running through our final stage in rain? A more feasible proposition, that both the women should sit in front so as to get the benefit of the hood, was rejected because neither of them would assume the responsibility of driving in the dark. But here a new and strange difficulty occurred. Of late, Bell and the Lieutenant had never sat together in the phaeton. Now, the Lieutenant declared it was much more safe that the horses should be driven by their lawful owner, who was accustomed to them. Accordingly, my post was in front. Thereupon, Bell, with many protestations of endearment, insisted on Queen Tita having the shelter of the hood. Bell, in fact, would not get up until she had seen my Lady safely ensconced there and swathed up like a mummy; it followed, accordingly, that Bell and her companion were hidden from us by the hood; and the last of our setting-out arrangements was simply this—that the Lieutenant absolutely and firmly refused to wear his waterproof, because, as he said, it would only have the effect of making the rain run in streams on to Bell's tartan plaid. The girl put forward all manner of entreaties in vain. The foolish young man

—he was on the headstrong side of thirty—would not hear of it.

So we turned the horses' heads to the north. Alas! over the mountainous country before us there lay an ominous darkness of sky. As we skirted Curwen Woods and drove by within sight of Clawthorpe Fell, the road became more hilly and more lonely, and it seemed as if we were to plunge into an unknown region inhabited only by mountains and hanging clouds. Nevertheless we could hear Bell laughing and chatting to the Lieutenant, and talking about what we should have to endure before we got to Kendal. As the wind rose slightly and blew the light waves of her laughter about, Tita called through to her, and asked her to sing again that Gathering of the Clans on the breezy braes o' Mar. But what would the wild mountain-spirits have done to us had they heard the twanging of a guitar up in this dismal region, to say nothing of the rain that would have destroyed the precious instrument for ever? For it was now pattering considerably on the top of the hood, and the wind had once more begun to blow. The darkness grew apace. The winding grey thread of the road took us up hill and down dale, twisting through a variegated country, of which we could see little but the tall hedges on each side of us. The rain increased. The wind blew it about, and moaned through the trees, and made a sound in the telegraph-wires overhead. These tall

grey poles were destined to be an excellent guide to us. As the gloom gathered over us, we grew accustomed to the monotonous rising and falling of the pale road, while here and there we encountered a great pool of water, which made the younger of the horses swerve from time to time. By and by we knew it would be impossible to make out any finger-post; so that the murmuring of the telegraph-wires in the wind promised to tell us if we were still keeping the correct route to Kendal.

So we plunged on in the deepening twilight, splashing into the shallow pools, and listening to the whistling of the wind and the hissing of the rain. Bell had made no attempt to call out the clans on this wild night, and both of the young folks had for the most part relapsed into silence, unless when they called to us some consolatory message or assurance that on the whole they rather enjoyed getting wet. But at last the Lieutenant proposed that he should get down and light the lamps; and, indeed, it was high time.

He got down. He came round to the front. Why the strange delay of his movements? He went round again to his seat, kept searching about for what seemed an unconscionable time, and then, coming back, said rather indifferently—

"Do you happen to have a match with you?"

"No," said I; and at the same moment Tita broke into a bright laugh.

She knew the shame and mortification that were now on the face of the Lieutenant, if only there had been more light to see him as he stood there. To have an old campaigner tricked in this way! He remained irresolute for a second or two; and then he said in accents of profound vexation—

"It is such stupidity as I never saw. I did leave my case in the inn. Madame, you must pardon me this ridiculous thing; and we must drive on until we come to a house."

A house! The darkness had now come on so rapidly that twenty houses would scarcely have been visible, unless with yellow lights burning in their windows. There was nothing for it but to urge on our wild career as best we might; while we watched the telegraph-posts to tell us how the road went, and Castor and Pollux, with the wet streaming down them, whirled the four wheels through the water and mud.

Tita had been making merry over our mishap, but this jocularity died away in view of the fact that at every moment there was a chance of our driving into a ditch. She forgot to laugh in her efforts to make out the road before us; and at last, when we drove into an avenue of trees under which there was pitch blackness, and as we felt that the horses were going down

a hill, she called out to stop, so that one of us should descend and explore the way.

A blacker night has not occurred since the separating of light and darkness at the Creation; and when the Lieutenant had got to the horses' heads, it was with the greatest difficulty he could induce them to go forward and down the hill. He had himself to feel his way in a very cautious fashion; and, indeed, his managing to keep the phaeton somewhere about the middle of the road until we had got from under this black avenue must be regarded as a feat. He had scarcely got back into his seat, when the rain, which had been coming down pretty heavily, now fell in torrents. We could hear it hissing in the pools of the road, and all around us on the trees and hedges, while the phaeton seemed to be struggling through a waterfall. No plaids, rugs, mackintoshes, or other device of man, could keep this deluge out; and Tita, with an air of calm resignation, made the remark that one of her shoes had come off and floated away. To crown all, we suddenly discovered that the telegraph-posts had abandoned us, and gone off along another road.

I stopped the horses. To miss one's way in the wilds of Westmoreland on such a night was no joke.

"Now, Bell, what has become of your knowledge

of this district? Must we go back, and follow the telegraph-wires? Or shall we push on on chance?"

"I can neither see nor speak for the rain," cries Bell out of the darkness. "But I think we ought to follow the telegraph-wires. They are sure to lead to Kendal."

"With your permission, Mademoiselle," said the Lieutenant, who was once more down in the road, "I think it would be a pity to go back. If we drive on, we must come to a village somewhere."

"They don't happen so often in Westmoreland as you might expect," says Bell, despondently.

"If you will wait here, then, I will go forward, and see if I can find a house," says the Lieutenant, at which Queen Tita laughs again, and says we should all be washed away before he returned.

The Lieutenant struggles into his seat. We push on blindly. The rain is still thundering down on us; and we wonder whether we are fated to find ourselves in the early dawn somewhere about Wast Water or Coniston.

About two hours before midnight, Columbus, standing on the forecastle, observed a light at a distance, and privately pointed it out to Queen Titania.

"'Tis a turnpike, as I am a living navigator!" exclaimed the adventurous man.

A gun would have been fired from the deck of the *Pinta* to announce these joyful tidings, only that the

rain had washed away our powder. But now that we were cheered with the sight of land, we pushed ahead gallantly; the light grew in size and intensity; there could be no doubt this wild region was inhabited by human beings; and at last a native appeared, who addressed us in a tongue which we managed with some difficulty to understand, and, having exacted from us a small gift, he allowed us to proceed.

Once more we plunge into darkness and wet, but we know that Kendal is near. Just as we are approaching the foot of the hill, however, on which the town stands, a wild shriek from Titania startles the air. The black shadow of a dog-cart is seen to swerve across in front of the horses' heads, and just skims by our wheels. The wrath that dwelt in my Lady's heart with regard to the two men in this phantom vehicle need not be expressed; for what with the darkness of the trees, and the roaring of the wind and rain, and the fact of these two travellers coming at a fine pace along the wrong side of the road, we just escaped a catastrophe.

But we survived that danger, too, as we survived the strife of the elements. We drove up into the town. We wheeled round by the archway of still another King's Arms; and presently a half-drowned party of people—with their eyes, grown accustomed to the darkness, wholly bewildered with the light—were standing in the warm and yellow glare of the hotel,

There was a fluttering of dripping waterproofs, a pulling asunder of soaked plaids, and a drying of wet and gleaming cheeks that were red with the rain. The commotion raised by our entrance was alarming. You would have thought we had taken possession of this big, warm, comfortable, old-fashioned inn. A thousand servants seemed to be scampering about the house to assist us; and by and by, when all those moist garments had been taken away, and other and warmer clothing put on, and a steaming and fragrant banquet placed on the table, you should have seen the satisfaction that dwelt on every face. Arthur had not come —at least, no one had been making inquiries for us. There was nothing for us but to attack the savoury feast, and relate with laughter and with gladness all the adventures of the day, until you would have thought that the grave mother of those two boys at Twickenham had grown merry with the champagne, whereas she had not yet tasted the wine that was frothing and creaming in her glass.

CHAPTER VI.

ALL ABOUT WINDERMERE.

"O meekest dove
Of Heaven! O Cynthia, ten-times bright and fair!
From thy blue throne, now filling all the air,
Glance but one little beam of tempered light
Into my bosom, that the dreadful might
And tyranny of love be somewhat scared."

It is a pleasant thing, especially in holiday-time, when one happens to have gone to bed with the depressing consciousness that outside the house the night is wild and stormy—rain pouring ceaselessly down and the fine weather sped away to the south—to catch a sudden glimmer, just as one opens one's eyes in the morning, of glowing green, where the sunlight is quivering on the waving branches of the trees. The new day is a miracle of freshness. The rain has washed the leaves, and the wind is shaking and rustling them in the warm light. You throw open the window, and the breeze that comes blowing in is sweet with the smell of wet roses. It is a new, bright, joyous day; and the rain and the black night have fled together.

Bell's audacity in daring to hope we might have a fine morning after that wild evening, had almost destroyed our belief in her weather foresight; but sure enough, when we got up on the following day, the

stone houses of Kendal were shining in the sun, and a bright light colouring up the faces of the country people who had come into the town on early business. And what was this we heard?—a simple and familiar air that carried Tita back to that small church in Surrey over which she presides—sung carelessly and lightly by a young lady who certainly did not know that she could be overheard—

> "Hark, hark, my soul, angelic songs are swelling
> O'er earth's green fields and ocean's wave-beat shore."

—Bell was at her orisons; but as the hymn only came to us in fitful and uncertain snatches, we concluded that the intervals were filled up by that light-hearted young woman twisting up the splendid folds of her hair. There was no great religious fervour in her singing, to be sure. Sometimes the careless songstress forgot to add the words, and let us have fragments of the pretty air, of which she was particularly fond. But there was no reason at all why this pious hymn should be suddenly forsaken for the "*rataplan*, *rataplan*, *rataplan—rataplan*, *plan*, *plan*, *plan*, *plan*," of the "Daughter of the Regiment."

When we went down stairs, Bell was gravely perusing the morning papers. At this time the Government were hurrying their Ballot Bill through the House, and the daily journals were full of clauses, amendments, and divisions. Bell wore rather a puzzled look; but she was so deeply interested—whether with

the Parliamentary Summary or the Fashionable Intelligence, can only be guessed—that she did not observe our entering the room. My Lady went gently forward to her, and said—

"Hark, hark, my soul, angelic songs are swelling
O'er earth's green fields——"

The girl looked up with a start, and with a little look of alarm.

"Young ladies," observed Tita, "who have a habit of humming airs during their toilet, ought to be sure that their room is not separated by a very thin partition from any other room."

"If it was only you, I don't care."

"It mightn't have been only me."

"There is no great harm in a hymn," says Bell.

"But when one mixes up a hymn with that wicked song which Maria and the Sergeant sing together? Bell, we will forgive you everything this morning. You are quite a witch with the weather, and you shall have a kiss for bringing us such a beautiful day."

The morning salutation was performed.

"Isn't there enough of that to go round?" says the third person of the group. "Bell used to kiss me dutifully every morning. But a French writer has described a young lady as a creature that ceases to kiss gentlemen at twelve and begins again at twenty."

"A French writer!" says Tita. "No French writer ever said anything so impertinent and so stupid. The

French are a cultivated nation, and their wit never takes the form of rudeness."

A nation or a man—it is all the same: attack either, and my Lady is ready with a sort of formal warranty of character.

"But why, Tita," says Bell, with just a trifle of protest in her voice, "why do you always praise the French nation? Other nations are as good as they are."

The laughter that shook the coffee-room of the King's Arms in Kendal, when this startling announcement was made to us cannot be conveyed in words. There was something so boldly ingenuous in Bell's protest that even Tita laughed till the tears stood in her eyes, and then she kissed Bell, and asked her pardon, and remarked that she was ready to acknowledge at any moment that the German nation was as good as the French nation.

"I did not mean anything of the kind," says Bell, looking rather shamefaced. "What does it matter to me what anyone thinks of the German nation?"

That was a true observation, at least. It did not matter to her, nor to anybody. The anthropomorphic abstractions which we call nations are very good pegs to hang prejudices on; but they do not suffer or gain much by any opinion we may form of their "characteristics."

"Where is Count von Rosen?" says Tita.

"I do not know," answered Bell, with an excellent assumption of indifference. "I have not seen him this morning. Probably he will come in and tell us that he has been to Windermere."

"No, Mademoiselle," said the Lieutenant, entering the room at the same moment, "I have not been to Windermere, but I am very anxious to go, for the morning is very fresh and good, and is it possible to say that it will remain fine all the day? We may start directly after breakfast. I have looked at the horses —they are all very well, and have suffered nothing from the rain—they are looking contented and comfortable after the bran-mash of last night, and to-morrow they will start again very well."

"And you have heard nothing of Arthur?" says my Lady.

"No."

Was the Lieutenant likely to have been scouring the country in search of that young man?

"It is very strange. If he found himself unable to get here by the time he expected to meet us, it is a wonder he did not send on a message. I hope he has met with no accident."

"No, there is no fear, Madame," said the Lieutenant; "he will overtake us soon. He may arrive to-night, or to-morrow before we go—he cannot make a mistake about finding us. But you do not propose to wait anywhere for him?"

"No," I say, decisively, "we don't. Or if we do wait for him, it will not be in Kendal."

The Lieutenant seemed to think that Arthur would overtake us soon enough; and need not further concern us. But my Lady appeared to be a little anxious about the safety of the young man until it was shown us that, after all, Arthur might have been moved to give the Major's cob a day's rest somewhere, in which case he could not possibly have reached Kendal by this time.

We go out into the sunlit and breezy street. We can almost believe Bell that there is a peculiar sweetness in the Westmoreland air. We lounge about the quaint old town, which, perched on the steep slope of a hill, has sometimes those curious juxtapositions of door-step and chimney-pot which are familiar to the successive terraces of Dartmouth. We go down to the green banks of the river; and the Lieutenant is bidden to observe how rapid and clear the brown stream is, even after coming through the dyeing and bleaching works. He is walking on in front with Bell. He does not strive to avoid her now—on the contrary, they are inseparable companions—but my Lady puzzles herself in vain to discover what are their actual relations towards each other at this time. They do not seem anxious or dissatisfied. They appear to have drifted back into those ordinary friendly terms of intercourse which had marked their setting out; but

how is this possible after what occurred in Wales? As neither has said anything to us about these things, nothing is known; these confidences have been invariably voluntary, and my Lady is quite well pleased that Bell should manage her own affairs.

Certainly, if Bell was at this time being pressed to decide between von Rosen and Arthur, that unfortunate youth from Twickenham was suffering grievously from an evil fortune. Consider what advantages the Lieutenant had in accompanying the girl into this dreamland of her youth, when her heart was opening out to all sorts of tender recollections, and when, to confer a great gratification upon her, you had only to say that you were pleased with Westmoreland, and its sunlight, and its people and scenery. What adjectives that perfervid Uhlan may have been using—and he was rather a good hand at expressing his satisfaction with anything—we did not try to hear; but Bell wore her brightest and happiest looks. Doubtless the Lieutenant was telling her that there was no water in the world could turn out such brilliant colours as those we saw bleaching on the meadows—that no river in the world ran half as fast as the Kent—and that no light could compare with the light of a Westmoreland sky in beautifying and clarifying the varied hues of the landscape that lay around. He was greatly surprised with the old-fashioned streets when we had clambered up to the town again. He paid particular attention

to the railway station. When a porter caught a boy back from the edge of the platform and angrily said to him, "Wut's thee doin' theear, an' the traäin a coomin' oop?" he made as though he understood the man. This was Bell's country; and everything in it was profoundly interesting.

However, when the train had once got away from the station, and we found ourselves being carried through the fresh and pleasant landscape—with a cool wind blowing in at the window, and all the trees outside bending and rustling in the breeze—it was not merely out of compliment to Bell that he praised the brightness of the day and the beauty of the country around.

"And it is so comforting to think of the horses enjoying a day's thorough rest," said Tita; "for when we start again to-morrow, they will have to attack some hard work."

"Only at first," said Bell, who was always ready to show that she knew the road; "the first mile or so is hilly; but after that the road goes down to Windermere and runs along by the lake to Ambleside. It is a beautiful drive through the trees; and if we get a day like this——"

No wonder she turned to look out with pride and delight on the glowing picture that lay around us—the background of which had glimpses of blue mountains lying pale and misty under light masses of cloud. The small stations we passed were smothered in green

foliage. Here and there we caught sight of a brown rivulet, or a long avenue of trees arching over a white road. And then, in an incredibly short space of time, we found ourselves outside the Windermere station, standing in the open glare of the day.

For an instant, a look of bewilderment, and even of disappointment, appeared on the girl's face. Evidently, she did not know the way. The houses that had sprung up of late years were strangers to her—strangers that seemed to have no business there. But whereas the new buildings, and the cutting of terraces and alterations of gardens, were novel and perplexing phenomena, the general features of the neighbourhood remained the same; and after a momentary hesitation she hit upon the right path up to Elleray, and thereafter was quite at home.

Now there rests in Bell's mind a strange superstition that she can remember, as a child, having sat upon Christopher North's knee. The story is wholly impossible and absurd; for Wilson died in the year in which Bell was born; but she nevertheless preserves the fixed impression of having seen the kingly old man, and wondered at his long hair and great collar, and listened to his talking to her. Out of what circumstance in her childhood this curious belief may have arisen is a psychological conundrum which Tita and I have long ago given up; and Bell herself cannot even suggest any other celebrated person of the

neighbourhood who may, in her infancy, have produced a profound impression on her imagination and caused her to construct a confused picture into which the noble figure of the old Professor had somehow and subsequently been introduced; but none the less she asks us how it is that she can remember exactly the expression of his face and eyes as he looked down on her, and how even to this day she can recall the sense of awe with which she regarded him, even as he was trying to amuse her.

The Lieutenant knew all about this story; and it was with a great interest that he went up to Elleray Cottage, and saw the famous chestnut which Christopher North has talked of to the world. It was as if some relative of Bell's had lived in this place—some foster-father or grand-uncle who had watched her youth; and who does not know the strange curiosity with which a lover listens to stories of the childhood of his sweetheart, or meets anyone who knew her in those old and half-forgotten years? It seems a wonderful thing to him that he should not have known her then —that all the world at that time, so far as he knew, was unconscious of her magical presence; and he seeks to make himself familiar with her earliest years, to nurse the delusion that he has known her always, and that ever since her entrance into the world she has belonged to him. In like manner, let two lovers, who have known each other for a number of years,

begin to reveal to each other when the first notion of love entered their mind; they will insensibly shift the date further and further back, as if they would blot out the pallid and colourless time in which they were stupid enough not to have found out their great affection for each other. The Lieutenant was quite vexed that he knew little of Professor Wilson's works. He said he would get them all the moment that he went back to London; and when Bell, as we lingered about the grounds of Elleray, told him how that there was a great deal of Scotch in the books, and how the old man whom she vaguely recollected had written about Scotland, and how that she had about as great a longing—when she was buried away down south in the commonplaceness of London and Surrey—to smell the heather and see the lovely glens and the far-reaching sea-lakes of the Highlands, as to reach her own and native Westmoreland, the Lieutenant began to nurture a secret affection for Scotland, and wondered when we should get there.

I cannot describe in minute detail our day's ramble about Windermere. It was all a dream to us. Many years had come and gone since those of us who were familiar with the place had been there; and somehow, half unconsciously to ourselves, we kept trying to get away from the sight of new people and new houses, and to discover the old familiar features of the neighbourhood that we had loved. Once or twice there

was in Tita's eyes a moisture she could scarce conceal; and the light of gladness on Bell's bright face was preserved there chiefly through her efforts to instruct the Lieutenant, which made her forget old memories. She was happy, too, in hitting on the old paths. When we went down from Elleray through the private grounds that lie along the side of the hill, she found no difficulty whatever in showing us how we were to get to the lake. She took us down through a close and sweet-smelling wood, where the sunlight only struggled at intervals through the innumerable stems and leaves, and lit up the brackens, and other ferns and underwood. There was a stream running close by, that plashed and gurgled along its stony channel. As we got further down the slope, the darkness of the avenue increased; and then all at once, at the end of the trees, we came in sight of a blinding glare of white—the level waters of the lake.

And then, when we left the wood and stood on the shore, all the fair plain of Windermere lay before us—wind-swept and troubled, with great dashes of blue along its surface, and a breezy sky moving overhead. Near at hand, there were soft green hills, shining in the sunlight; and, further off, long and narrow promontories, piercing out into the water, with their dark line of trees growing almost black against the silver glory of the lake. But then again the hurrying wind would blow away the shadow of the cloud; a

beam of sunlight would run along the line of trees, making them glow green above the blue of the water; and from this moving and shifting and shining picture we turned to the far and ethereal masses of the Langdale Pikes and the mountains above Ambleside, which changed as the changing clouds were blown over from the west.

We got a boat and went out into the wilderness of water and wind and sky. Now we saw the reedy shores behind us, and the clear and shallow water at the brink of which we had been standing, receiving the troubled reflection of the woods. Out here the beautiful islands of Lady Holm, Thompson's Holm, and Belle Isle were shimmering in green. Far up there in the north the slopes and gullies of the great mountains were showing a thousand hues of soft velvet-like greys and blues, and even warming up into a pale yellowish green, where a ray of the sunlight struck the lower slopes. Over by Furness Fells the clouds lay in heavier masses, and moved slowly; but elsewhere there was a brisk motion over the lake, that changed its beauties even as one looked at them.

"Mademoiselle," observed the Lieutenant, as if a new revelation had broken upon him, "all that you have said about your native county is true; and now I understand why that you did weary in London, and think very much of your own home."

Perhaps he thought, too, that there was but one

county in England, or in the world, that could have produced this handsome, courageous, generous, and true-hearted English girl—for such are the exaggerations that lovers cherish.

We put into Bowness, and went up to the Crown Hotel there. In an instant—as rapidly as Alloway Kirk became dark when Tam o' Shanter called out—the whole romance of the day went clean out and was extinguished. How any of God's creatures could have come to dress themselves in such fashion, amid such scenery, our young Uhlan professed himself unable to tell; but here were men—apparently in their proper senses—wearing such comicalities of jackets and resplendent knickerbockers as would have made a harlequin blush, with young ladies tarred and feathered, as it were, with staring stripes and alarming petticoats, and sailors' hats of straw. Why should the borders of a lake be provocative of these mad eccentricities? Who that has wandered about the neighbourhoods of Zürich, Luzern, and Thun, does not know the wild freaks which Englishmen (far more than Englishwomen) will permit to themselves in dress? We should have fancied those gentlemen with the variegated knickerbockers had just come down from the Righi (by rail) if they had had Alpenstocks and snow-spectacles with them; and, indeed, it was a matter for surprise that these familiar appurtenances were absent from the shores of Windermere.

My Lady looked at the strange people rather askance.

"My dear," says Bell, in an undertone, "they are quite harmless."

We had luncheon in a corner of the great room. Dinner was already laid; and our plain meal seemed to borrow a certain richness from that long array of coloured wine-glasses. Bell considered it rather pretty; but my Lady began to wonder how much crystal the servants would have broken by the time we got back to Surrey. Then we went down to the lake again, stepped into a small steamer, and stood out to sea.

It was now well on in the afternoon; and the masses of cloud that came rolling over from the west and south-west, when they clung to the summits of the mountains, threw a deeper shadow on the landscape beneath. Here and there, too, as the evening wore on and we had steamed up within sight of the small island that is called Seamew Crag, we occasionally saw one of the great heaps of cloud get melted down into a grey mist that for a few minutes blotted out the side of a mountain. Meanwhile the sun had also got well up to the north-west; and as the clouds came over and swept about the peaks of Langdale, a succession of the wildest atmospheric effects became visible. Sometimes a great gloom would overspread the whole landscape, and we began to anticipate a night of rain; then a curious saffron glow would ap-

pear behind the clouds; then a great smoke of grey would be seen to creep down the hill, and finally the sunlight would break through, shining on the retreating vapour and on the wet sides of the hills. Once or twice a light trail of cloud passed across the lake and threw a slight shower of rain upon us; but when we got to Ambleside, the clouds had been for the most part driven by, and the clear heavens—irradiated by a beautiful twilight—tempted us to walk back to Windermere village by the road.

You may suppose that that was a pleasant walk for those two young folks. Everything had conspired to please Bell during the day, and she was in a dangerously amiable mood. As the dusk fell, and the white water gleamed through the trees by the margin of the lake, we walked along the winding road without meeting a solitary creature; and Queen Titania gently let our young friends get on ahead, so that we could only see the two dark figures pass underneath the dark avenues of trees.

"Did you ever see a girl more happy?" she says.

"Yes, once—at Eastbourne."

Tita laughs, in a low, pleased way; for she is never averse to recalling these old days.

"I was very stupid then," she says.

That is a matter upon which she, of course, ought to be able to speak. It would be unbecoming to interfere with the right of private judgment.

"Besides," she remarks, audaciously, "I did not mean half I said. Don't you imagine I meant half what I said. It was all making fun, you know, wasn't it?"

"It has been deadly earnest since."

"Poor thing!" she says, in the most sympathetic way; and there is no saying what fatal thunderbolt she might have launched, had not her attention been called away just then.

For as we went along in the twilight it seemed to us that the old moss-covered wall was beginning to throw a slight shadow, and that the pale road was growing warmer in hue. Moved by the same impulse, we turned suddenly to the lake, and lo! out there beyond the trees a great yellow glory was lying on the bosom of Windermere, and somewhere—hidden by the dark branches—the low moon had come into the clear violet sky. We walked on until we came to a clearance in the trees, and there, just over the opposite shore, the golden crescent lay in the heavens, the purple of which was suffused by the soft glow. It was a wonderful twilight. The ripples that broke in among the reeds down at the shore quivered in lines of gold; and a little bit further out a small boat lay black as night in the path of the moonlight. The shadow cast by the wall grew stronger; and now the trees, too, threw black bars across the yellow road. The two lovers paid no heed to these things for a

long time—they wandered on, engrossed in talk. But at length we saw them stop and turn towards the lake; while Bell looked back towards us, with her face getting a faint touch of the glory coming over from the south.

All the jesting had gone out of Bell's face. She was as grave, and gentle, and thoughtful—when we reached the two of them—as Undine was on the day after her marriage; and insensibly she drew near to Tita, and took her away from us, and left the Lieutenant and myself to follow. That young gentleman was as solemn as though he had swallowed the Longer Catechism and the Westminster Confession of Faith. He admitted that it was a beautiful evening. He made a remark about the scenery of the district which would have served admirably as a motto for one of those views that stationers put at the head of their note-paper. And then, with some abruptness, he asked what we should do if Arthur did not arrive in Kendal that night or next day.

"If Arthur does not come to-night, we shall probably have some dinner at the King's Arms. If he does not come in the morning, we may be permitted to take some breakfast. And then, if his staying away does not alter the position of Windermere, we shall most likely drive along this very road to-morrow forenoon. But why this solemn importance conferred on Arthur all of a sudden?"

"Oh, I cannot tell you."

"Nobody asked you."

"But I will give you a very good cigar, my dear friend."

"That is a great deal better—but let it be old and dry."

And so we got back to Windermere station and took train to Kendal. By the time we were walking up through the streets of the old town the moon had swum further up into the heavens, and its light, now a pale silver, was shining along the fronts of the houses.

We went into the inn. No message from Arthur. A little flutter of dismay disturbs the women, until the folly of imagining all manner of accidents—merely because an erratic young man takes a day longer to drive to Kendal than they anticipated—is pointed out to them. Then dinner, and Bell appears in her prettiest dress, so that even Tita, when she comes into the room, kisses her, as if the girl had performed a specially virtuous action in merely choosing out of a milliner's shop a suitable colour.

[*Note by Queen Titania.*—"I hope I am revealing no secrets; but it would be a great pity if anyone thought that Bell was *heartless*, or *indifferent*, a mistake that might occur when she is written about by one who makes a jest about *the most serious moments* in one's life. Now it was quite pitiable to see how the poor girl was troubled as we walked home that night by the side of Windermere. She as good as confessed to me—not in words, you know, for between women the least hint is *quite sufficient*, and saves a great deal of embarrassment—that she very much liked the Lieutenant, and admired his character, and that she was extremely vexed and

sorry that she had been compelled to refuse him when he made her an offer. She told me, too, that he had pressed her not to make that decision final; and that she had admitted to him that it was really against her own wish that she had done so. But then she put it to me, as she had put it to him, what she would think of herself if she went and *betrayed* Arthur in this way. Really, I could not see any *betrayal* in the matter; and I asked her whether it would be fair to Arthur to marry him while she secretly would have preferred to marry another. She said she would try all in her power not to marry Arthur, if only he would be reconciled to her breaking with him; but then she immediately added, with an earnestness that I thought very *pathetic*, that if she treated Arthur badly, any other man might fairly expect her to treat him badly too; and if she could not satisfy herself that she had acted rightly throughout, she would not marry at all. It is a great pity I cannot show the readers of these few lines our pretty Bell's photograph, or they would see the *downright absurdity* of such a resolve as that. To think of a girl like her not marrying is simply out of the question; but the danger at this moment was that, in one of these foolish fits of determination, she would send the Lieutenant away altogether. *Then* I think there might be a chance of her not marrying at all; for I am *greatly mistaken* if she does not care a good deal more for him than she will acknowledge. I advised her to tell Arthur frankly how matters stand; but she seems afraid. Under any circumstances, he will be sure to discover the truth; and then it will be far worse for him than if she made a *full confession* just now, and got rid of all these perplexities and entanglements, which ought not to be throwing a cloud over a young face."]

CHAPTER VII.

ON CAVIARE AND OTHER MATTERS.

"At the inn where we stopped he was exceedingly dissatisfied with some roast mutton which he had for dinner. The ladies, I saw, wondered to see the great philosopher, whose wisdom and wit they had been admiring all the way, get into ill-humour from such a cause."

"THERE is no Paradise without its Serpent," said my Lady, with a sigh, as we were about to leave the

white streets of Kendal for the green heart of the Lake district.

A more cruel speech was never made. Arthur, for aught we knew, might be lying smashed up in a Yorkshire ditch. He had not overtaken us even on the morning after our arrival in Kendal. No message had come from him. Was this a time to liken him to the Father of Lies, when perhaps the Major's cob had taken him down a railway cutting or thrown him into a disused coalpit? What, for example, if his corpse had been brought into the King's Arms in which the above words were uttered? Would the Lieutenant have spoken of him contemptuously as "a pitiful fellow—oh, a very pitiful fellow!" Would Bell have borne his presence with a meek and embarrassed resignation; or would Queen Tita have regarded the young man—who used to be a great friend of hers—as one intending to do her a deadly injury?

"Poor Arthur!" I say. "Whither have all thy friends departed?"

"At least, he does not want for an apologist," says Tita, with a little unnecessary fierceness.

"Perhaps thou art lying under two wheels in a peaceful glade. Perhaps thou art floating out to the ocean on the bosom of a friendly stream—with all the companions of thy youth unheeding——"

"Stuff!" says Queen Titania; and when I observe that I will address no further appeal to her—for that

a lady who lends herself to match-making abandons all natural instincts and is insensible to a cry for pity —she turns impatiently and asks what I have done with her eau-de-cologne, as if the fate of Arthur were of less importance to her than that trumpery flask.

Wherever the young man was, we could gain no tidings of him; and so we went forth once more on our journey. But as the certainty was that he had not passed us, how was it that Queen Tita feared the presence of this evil thing in the beautiful land before us?

"For," said the Lieutenant, pretending he was quite anxious about the safety of the young man, and, on the whole, desirous of seeing him, "he may have gone to Carlisle, as he at first proposed, to meet us there."

"Oh, do you think so?" said Bell, eagerly. Was she glad, then, to think that during our wanderings in her native county we should not be accompanied by that unhappy youth?

But the emotions which perplexed my Lady's heart at this time were of the most curious sort. It was only by bits and snatches that the odd contradictions and intricacies of them were revealed. To begin with, she had a sneaking fondness for Arthur, begotten of old associations. She was vexed with him because he was likely to ruin her plan for the marriage of Bell and the Lieutenant; and when Tita thought of this delightful prospect being destroyed by the interference

of Arthur, she grew angry, and regarded him as an unreasonable and officious young man, who ought to be sent about his business. Then again, when she recalled our old evenings in Surrey, and the pleasant time the boy had in sweethearting with our Bonny Bell during the long and lazy afternoon walks, she was visited with remorse, and wished she could do something for him. But a claimant of this sort who represents an injury is certain, sooner or later, to be regarded with dislike. He is continually reminding us that we have injured him, and disturbing our peace of mind. Sometimes Tita resented this claim (which was entirely of her own imagining) so strongly as to look upon Arthur as a perverse and wicked intermeddler with the happiness of two young lovers. So the world wags. The person who is inconvenient to us does us a wrong. At the very basis of our theatrical drama lies the principle that non-success in a love-affair is criminal. Two young men shall woo a young woman; the one shall be taken, and the other made a villain because he paid the girl the compliment of wanting to marry her, and justice shall not be satisfied until everybody has hounded and hunted the poor villain through all the phases of the play, until all the good people meet to witness his discomfiture, and he is bidden to go away and be a rejected suitor no more.

It was only in one of these varying moods that Tita had shown a partial indifference to Arthur's fate.

She was really concerned about his absence. When she took her seat in the phaeton, she looked back and down the main thoroughfare of Kendal, half expecting to see the Major's cob and a small dog-cart come driving along. The suggestion that he might have gone on to Penrith or Carlisle comforted her greatly. The only inexplicable circumstance was that Arthur had not written or telegraphed to Kendal, at which town he knew we were to stop.

About five minutes after our leaving Kendal, Arthur was as completely forgotten as though no such hapless creature was in existence. We were all on foot except Tita, who remained in the phaeton to hold the reins in a formal fashion. For about a mile and a half the road gradually rises, giving a long spell of collar-work to horses with weight to drag behind them. Tita, who weighs about a feather and a half, was commissioned to the charge of the phaeton while the rest of us dawdled along the road, giving Castor and Pollux plenty of time. It was a pleasant walk. The Lieutenant—with an amount of hypocrisy of which I had not suspected him guilty—seemed to prefer to go by the side of the phaeton, and talk to the small lady sitting enthroned there; but Bell, once on foot and in her native air, could not so moderate her pace. We set off up the hill. There was a scent of peat-reek in the air. A cool west wind was blowing through the tall hedges and the trees; and sudden shafts and gleams of sunlight

fell from the uncertain sky and lit up the wild masses of weeds and flowers by the roadside. Bell pulled a white dog-rose, and kissed it as though a Westmoreland rose was an old friend she had come to see. She saw good jests in the idlest talk, and laughed; and all her face was aglow with delight as she looked at the beautiful country, and the breezy sky, and the blue peaks of the mountains that seemed to grow higher and higher the further we ascended the hill.

"You silly girl," I say to her, when she is eager to point out cottages built of stone, and stone-walls separating small orchards from the undulating meadows, "do you think there are no stone cottages anywhere but in Westmoreland?"

"I didn't say there wasn't," she answers, regardless of grammar.

Yes, we were certainly in Westmoreland. She had scarcely uttered the words when a rapid pattering was heard among the trees, and presently a brisk shower was raining down upon us. Would she return to the phaeton for a shawl? No. She knew the ways of Westmoreland showers on such a day as this—indeed, she had predicted that some of the heavy clouds being blown over from the other side of Windermere would visit us in passing. In a few minutes the shower lightened, the wind that shook the heavy drops from the trees seemed to bring dryness with it, and presently a warm glow of sunshine sprang down upon the

road, and the air grew sweet with resinous and fragrant smells.

"It was merely to lay the dust," said Bell, as though she had ordered the shower.

After you pass Rather Heath, you go down into the valley of the Gowan. The road is more of a lane than a highway; and the bright and showery day added to the picturesqueness of the tall hedges and the wooded country on both sides by sending across alternate splatches of gloom and bursts of sunlight. More than once, too, the tail-end of a shower caught us; but we cared little for rain that had wind and sunlight on the other side of it; and Bell, indeed, rather rejoiced in the pictorial effects produced by changing clouds, when the sunshine caused the heavier masses to grow black and ominous, or shone mistily through the frail sheet produced by the thinner masses melting into rain.

Tita is a pretty safe driver in Surrey, where she knows every inch of the roads and lanes, and has nothing to distract her attention; but now, among these hilly and stony Westmoreland roads, her enjoyment of the bright panorama around her considerably drew her attention away from the horses' feet. Then she was sorely troubled by news that had reached us that morning from home. An evil-doer, whom she had hitherto kept in order by alternate bribes and threats, had broken out again, and given his wife a desperate

thrashing. Now this occurrence seldom happened except when both husband and wife were intoxicated; and for some time back my Lady had succeeded in stopping their periodical bouts. With these evil tidings came the report that a horrible old creature of sixty—as arrant a rogue as ever went on crutches, although my Lady would have taken the life of anyone who dared to say so of one of her pets—had deliberately gone to Guildford and pawned certain pieces of flannel which had been given her to sew. In short, as Bell proceeded to point out, the whole neighbourhood was in revolt. The chief administrator of justice and Queen's Almoner of the district was up here skylarking in a phaeton, while her subjects down in the south had broken out into flagrant rebellion. History tells of a Scotch parish that suddenly rose and hanged the minister, drowned the precentor, and raffled the church bell; who was now to answer for the safety of our most cherished parochial institutions when the guardian of law and order had withdrawn herself into the regions of the mountains?

"That revolt," it is observed, "is the natural consequence of tyranny. For years you have crushed down and domineered over that unhappy parish; and the unenfranchised millions, who had no more liberty than is vouchsafed to a stabled horse or a chained dog, have risen at last. *Mort aux tyrans!* Will they chase us, do you think, Bell?"

"I am quite convinced," remarked my Lady, deliberately and calmly, "that the poor old woman has done nothing of the kind. She could not do it. Why should she seek to gain a few shillings at the expense of forfeiting all the assistance she had to expect from me?"

"An independent peasantry is not to be bought over by pitiful bribes. 'Tis a free country; and the three balls ought to be placed among the insignia of Royalty, instead of that meaningless sphere. Can any student of history now present explain the original purpose of that instrument?"

"I suppose," says Bell, "that Queen Elizabeth, who always has it in her hand, used to chastise her maid-servants with it."

"Wrong. With that weapon Henry the Eighth was wont to strike down and murder the good priests that interfered with his unholy wishes."

"Henry the Eighth——" says my Lady; but just at this moment Castor caught a stone slightly with his foot, and the brief stumble caused my Lady to mind her driving; so that Henry the Eighth, wherever he is, may be congratulated on the fact that she did not finish her sentence.

Then we ran pleasantly along the valley until we came in sight, once more, of Windermere. We drove round the foot of the green slopes of Elleray. We plunged into the wood, and there was all around us a

moist odour of toadstools and fern. We went by St. Catherine's, and over Troutbeck Bridge, and so down to the lake-side by Ecclerigg House and Lowood. It was along this road that Bell and her companion had walked the night before, when the yellow moon rose up in the south and threw a strange light over Windermere. The Lieutenant had said not a word about the results of that long interview; but they had clearly not been unfavourable to him, for he had been in excellent good spirits during the rest of the evening, and now he was chatting to Bell as if nothing had occurred to break the even tenor of their acquaintanceship. They had quite resumed their old relations, which was a blessing to the two remaining members of the party. Indeed, there was no bar now placed upon Bell's singing except her own talking; and when a young lady undertakes to instruct her elders in the history, traditions, manners, customs, and peculiarities of Westmoreland, she has not much time for strumming on the guitar. Bell acted the part of *valet de place* to perfection, and preached at us just as if we were all as great strangers as the Lieutenant was. It is true our guide was not infallible. Sometimes we could see that she was in deep distress over the names of the peaks up in the neighbourhood of the Langdale Pikes; but what did it matter to us which was Scawfell and which was Bowfell, or which was Great Gable and which Great End? We had come

to enjoy ourselves, not to correct the Ordnance Survey Maps.

"I am afraid," said my Lady, when some proposal to stop at Ambleside and climb Wansfell Pike had been unanimously rejected, "that we have been throughout this journey disgracefully remiss. We have gone to see nothing that we ought to have seen. We have never paid any attention to ancient ruins, or galleries of pictures, or celebrated monuments. We have not climbed a single mountain. We went past Woodstock without looking in at the gates—we did not even go to see the obelisk on Evesham Plain——"

"That was because some of you drove the horses the wrong way," it is remarked.

"Indeed, we have done nothing that we ought to have done."

"Perhaps, Madame," said the Lieutenant, "that is why the voyage has been so pleasant to us. One cannot always be instructing oneself, like a tourist."

If you wish to vex my Lady, call her a tourist. This subtle compliment of the Lieutenant pleased her immensely: but I confess myself unable to see in what respects we were not tourists, except that we were a little more ignorant, and indifferent to our ignorance, than holiday travellers generally are. What tourist, for example, would have done such a barbaric thing as go through Ambleside without stopping a day there?

That was all along of Bell, however, who insisted on our spending the treasure of our leisure time upon Grasmere; and who was strengthened in her demands by my Lady, when she came in view of a considerable number of tourists lounging about the former town. The poor men were for the most part dressed as mountaineers—otherwise they were quite harmless. They were loitering about the main thoroughfare of Ambleside, with their hands in the pockets of their knickerbockers, gazing in at a stationer's window, or regarding a brace of setters that a keeper standing in front of an hotel had in leash. They did not even look narrowly at the knees of our horses—an ordinary piece of polite impertinence. They were well-meaning and well-conducted persons; and the worst that could be said of them, that they were tourists, has been said about many good and respectable people. A man may have climbed Loughrigg Fell, and yet be an attentive husband and an affectionate father; while knickerbockers in themselves are not an indictable offence. My Lady made no answer to these humble representations; but asked for how long the horses would have to be put up before we started again.

Bell's enthusiasm of the morning had given way to something of disappointment, which she tried hard to conceal. Ambleside, one of the places she had been dreaming about for years, looked painfully modern now. In thinking about it, down in our southern

home, she had shut out of the picture, hotels, shops, and fashionably-dressed people, and had dwelt only on the wild and picturesque features of a neighbourhood that had at one time been as familiar to her as her mother's face. But now, Ambleside seemed to have grown big, and new, and strange; and she lost the sense of proprietorship which she had been exhibiting in our drive through the scenery of the morning. Then Loughrigg Fell did us an evil turn—gathering up all the clouds that the wind had driven over, and sending them gently and persistently down into the valley of the Rothay, so that a steady rain had set in. The Lieutenant did not care much how the sky might be clouded over, so long as Bell's face remained bright and happy; but it was quite evident she was disappointed, and he in vain attempted to reassure her by declaring that these two days had convinced him that the Lake country was the most beautiful in the world. She could not foresee then that this very gloom, that seemed to mean nothing but constant rain, would procure for us that evening by far the most impressive sight that we encountered during the whole of our long summer ramble.

Our discontent with Loughrigg Fell took an odd turn when it discharged itself upon the Duke of Wellington. We had grown accustomed to that foolish picture of the Waterloo Heroes, in which the Duke, in a pair of white pantaloons, stands in the attitude of a

dancing-master, with an idiotic simper on his face. All along the road, in public-houses, inns, and hotels, we had met this desperate piece of decoration on the walls, and had only smiled a melancholy smile when we came upon another copy. But this particular print seemed to be quite offensively ridiculous. If Henry the Eighth had been inside these long white pantaloons and that tight coat, my Lady could not have regarded the figure with a severer contempt. We picked out enemies among the attendant generals, just as one goes over an album of photographs and has a curious pleasure in recording mental likes and dislikes produced by unknown faces. Somehow, all the Waterloo Heroes on this evening looked stupid and commonplace. It seemed a mercy that Napoleon was beaten; but how he had been beaten by such a series of gabies and nincompoops none of us could make out.

Then the Lieutenant must needs grumble at the luncheon served up to us. It was a good enough luncheon, as hotels go; and even my Lady was moved to express her surprise that a young man who professed himself able to enjoy anything in the way of food, and who had told us amusing stories of his foraging adventures in campaigning time, should care whether there were or were not lemon and bread-crumbs with a mutton cutlet.

"Madame," said the Lieutenant, "that is very well

in a campaign, and you are glad of anything; but there is no merit in eating badly-cooked food—none at all."

"A soldier should not mind such trifles," she said; but she smiled as though to say that she agreed with him all the same.

"Well, I think," said the young man, doggedly, "that is no shame that anyone should know what is good to eat, and that it is properly prepared. It is not any more contemptible than dressing yourself in good taste, which is a duty you owe to other people. You should see our old generals—who are very glad of some coarse bread, and a piece of sausage, and a tumbler of sour wine, when they are riding across a country in the war—how they study delicate things, and scientific cookery, and all that, in Berlin."

"And do you follow their example when you are at home?"

"Not always; I have not enough time. But when you come to my house in Berlin, Madame, you will see what luncheon you shall have."

"Can't you tell us about it now?" says Tita.

"Pray do," echoes Bell, after casting another reproachful glance at the rain out of doors.

The Lieutenant laughed; but seeing that the women were quite serious, he proceeded in a grave and solemn manner to instruct them in the art of preparing luncheon.

"First," said he, "you must have Russian black bread and French white bread cut into thin slices—but you do not use the black bread yet a while; and you must have some good Rhine wine, a little warmed if it is in the winter; some Bordeaux, a bottle of green Chartreuse, and some champagne, if there are ladies. Now, for the first, you take a slice of white bread, you put a little butter on it, very thin, and then you open a pot of Russian caviare, and you put that on the slice of bread three-quarters of an inch thick, not less than that. You must not taste it by little and little, as all English ladies do, but eat it boldly, and you will be grateful. Then half a glass of soft Rhine wine—if it is a good Marcobrunner, that is excellent. Then you eat one slice of the black bread, with butter on it, more thick than on the white bread. Then you have two, perhaps three, Norwegian anchovies——"

"Would you mind my writing these things down?" says my Lady.

The Lieutenant of course assents; she produces a small bunch of ivory tablets; and I know the horrible purpose that fills her mind as she proceeds to jot down this programme.

"You must have the caviare and the anchovies of real quality, or everything is spoiled. With the anchovies you may eat the black bread, or the white, but I think without butter. Then half a glass of Rhine wine——"

"Those half-glasses of Rhine wine are coming in rather often," remarks Bell.

"No, Mademoiselle, that is the last of the Rhine wine. Next is a thin slice of white bread, very thin butter, and a very thin slice of Bologna sausage. This is optional——"

"My dear," I say to Tita, "be sure you put down '*This is optional!*'"

"With it you have a glass of good and soft Bordeaux wine. Then, Madame, we come to the reindeer's tongue. This is the *pièce de résistance*, and your guests must eat of it just as they have their hour for dinner in the evening. Also, if they are ladies, they may prefer a sparkling wine to the Bordeaux, though the Bordeaux is much better. And this is the reason:—After the reindeer's tongue is taken away, and you may eat an olive or two, then a *pâté de foie gras*—real from Strasburg——"

"Stop!" cries one of the party. "If I have any authority left, I forbid the addition to that disastrous catalogue of another single item! I will not suffer their introduction into the house! Away with them!"

"But, my dear friend," says the Lieutenant, "it is a good thing to accustom yourself to eat the meats of all countries—you know not where you may find yourself."

"Yes," says Bell gently, "one ought to learn to like caviare, lest one should be thrown on a desert island."

"And why not?" says the persistent young man. "You are thrown on a desert island—you catch a sturgeon—you take the roe, and you know how to make very good caviare——"

"But how about the half-glass of Rhine wine?" says my Lady.

"You cannot have everything in a desert island; but in a town, where you have time to study such things——"

"And where you can order coffins for half-past ten," it is suggested.

"——A good luncheon is a good thing."

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Bell, "the rain has ceased."

And so it had. While we had been contemplating that imaginary feast, and paying no attention to the changes out of doors, the clouds had gradually withdrawn themselves up the mountains, and the humid air showed no more slanting lines of rain. But still overhead there hung a heavy gloom; and along the wet woods, and on the troubled bosom of the lake, and up the slopes of the hills, there seemed to lie an ominous darkness. Should we reach Grasmere in safety? The Lieutenant had the horses put to with all speed; and presently Bell was taking us at a rapid pace into the wooded gorge that lies between Nab Scar and Loughrigg Fell, where the gathering twilight seemed to deepen with premonitions of a storm.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT NIGHT ON GRASMERE.

"Ye who have yearned
With too much passion, will here stay and pity,
For the mere sake of truth; as 'tis a ditty
Not of these days, but long ago 'twas told
By a cavern wind unto a forest old;
And then the forest told it in a dream
To a sleeping lake."

We drove into the solitude of this deep valley without uttering a word. How could we tell what the strange gloom and silence might portend? Far away up the misty and rounded slopes of Loughrigg the clouds lay heavy and thick, and over the masses of Rydal Fell, on the other side of the gorge, an ominous darkness brooded. Down here in the chasm the trees hung cold and limp in the humid air, crushed by the long rain. There was no sign of life abroad, only that we heard the rushing of the river Rothay in among the underwood in the channel of the stream. There was not even any motion in that wild and gloomy sky, that looked all the stranger that the storm-clouds did not move.

But as we drove on, it seemed to become less likely that the rain would set in again. The clouds had got banked up in great billows of vapour; and underneath them we could see, even in the twilight, the forms of the mountains with a strange distinctness. The green

of the distant slopes up there grew more and more intense, strengthened as it was by long splashes of a deep purple where the slate was visible; then the heavy grey of the sky, weighing upon the summits of the hills.

But all this was as nothing to the wild and gloomy scene that met our view when we came in sight of Rydal Water. We scarcely knew the lake we had loved of old, in bright days, and in sunshine, and blowing rain. Here, hidden away among reeds, lay a long stretch of dark slate-blue, with no streak of white along the shores, no ripple off the crags, to show that it was water. So perfect was the mirror-like surface, that it was impossible to say in the gathering gloom where the lake ended and the land began. The islands, the trees, the fields, and the green spaces of the hills, were as distinct below as above; and where the dark blue of the lake ran in among the reeds, no one could make out the line of the shore. It was a strange and impressive scene, this silent lake lying at the foot of the hills, and so calm and death-like that the motionless clouds of the sky lay without a tremor on the sheet of glass. This was not the Rydal Water we had been hoping to see, but a solitary and enchanted lake, struck silent and still by the awful calmness of the twilight and the presence of the lowering clouds.

We got down from the phaeton. The horses were

allowed to walk quietly on, with Tita in charge, while we sauntered along the winding road, by the side of this sombre sheet of water. There was no more fear of rain. There was a firmness about the outlines of the clouds that became more marked as the dusk fell. But although the darkness was coming on apace, we did not hasten our steps much. When should we ever again see such a picture as this, the like of which Bell, familiar with the sights and sounds of the district from her childhood, had never seen before?

What I have written above conveys nothing of the impressive solemnity and majesty of this strange sight as we saw it; and indeed I had resolved, before entering the Lake district, to leave out of the jottings of a mere holiday traveller any mention of scenes which have become familiar to the world through the imperishable and unapproachable descriptions of the great masters who lived and wrote in these regions. But such jottings must be taken for what they are worth—the hasty record of hasty impressions; and how could our little party have such a vision vouchsafed to them without at least noting it down as an incident of their journey?

We walked on in the darkness. The slopes of Nab Scar had become invisible. Here and there a white cottage glimmered out from the roadside; and Bell knew the name of every one of them, and of the people who used to occupy them.

"How surprised some of our friends would be," she said to Tita, "if we were to call on them to-night, and walk in without saying a word."

"They would take you for a banshee," said my Lady, "on such an evening as this. Get up, Bell, and let us drive on. I am beginning to shiver—whether with fright or with cold, I don't know."

So we got into the phaeton again, and sent the horses forward. We drove along the broad road which skirts the reedy and shallow end of Rydal Water, and entered the valley of the stream which comes flowing through the trees from Grasmere. It was now almost dark; and the only sound we could hear was that of the stream plashing along its rocky bed. By and by, a glimmer of yellow light was observed in front; and Bell having announced that this was the Prince of Wales Hotel, we were soon within its comfortable precincts. In passing we had got a glimpse of a dark steel-grey lake lying amid grey mists and under sombre hills—that was all we knew as yet of Grasmere.

But about an hour afterwards, when we had dined, the Lieutenant came back from the window at which we had been standing for a minute or two, and said—

"Mademoiselle, I have a communication for you."

Mademoiselle looked up.

"If you will go to the window——"

Bell rose and went directly.

"I know," said my Lady, with a well-affected sigh. "The night has cleared up—there is starlight or moonlight, or something, and I suppose we shall have to go out in a boat to please these foolish young people. But I think you will be disappointed this time, Count von Rosen."

"Why, Madame?"

"This is a respectable hotel. Do you think they would give you a boat? Now, if there was some old lady to be cajoled, I daresay you would succeed——"

"Oh, you do think we cannot get a boat, yes? I do not suppose there is any trouble about that, if only Mademoiselle cares about going on the lake. Perhaps she does not—but you must see how beautiful this lake is at present."

The idea of Bell not wishing to go out on Grasmere—at any hour of the night—so long as there was a yellow moon rising over the dusky heights of Silver Home! The girl was all in a flutter of delight when she returned from the window—anxious that we should all see Grasmere under these fine conditions, just as if Grasmere belonged to her. And the Lieutenant, having gone outside for a few minutes, returned with the information that a boat was waiting for us. There was no triumph in his face—no exultation; and it never occurred to anyone to ask whether this young Uhlan had secured the boat by throwing the owner of it into

the lake. The women were quite satisfied to accept all the pleasant things he brought them, and never stopped to inquire by what tyrannical or disgraceful means the young Prussian had succeeded in his fell endeavours. But at all events he managed to keep out of the police-office.

As a matter of fact, the boat was not only waiting when Tita and Bell, having dressed for the purpose, came downstairs, but was supplied with all manner of nice cushions, plaids, rugs, and a guitar-case. The women showed a good deal of trepidation in stepping into the frail craft, which lay under the shadow of a small jetty; but once out in the open lake, we found sufficient light around us, and Bell, pulling her grey and woollen shawl more tightly around her, turned to look at the wonders of Grasmere, which she had not seen for many years.

It was a pleasant night. All the hills and woods on the other side of the lake seemed for the most part in a black shadow; but out here the moonlight dwelt calmly on the water, and lit up the wooded island further down, and shone along the level shores. As we went out into the silent plain, the windows of the hotel grew smaller and smaller, until in the distance we could see them but as minute points of orange fire that glittered down on the black surface below. Then, in the perfect stillness of the night—as the measured sound of the rowlocks told of our pro-

gress, and the moonlight shone on the gleaming blades of the oars—we were all at once startled by a loud and hissing noise, that caused Tita to utter a slight cry of alarm.

We had run into a great bed of water-weeds, that was all—a tangled mass of water-lily leaves, with millions of straight horsetails rising from the shallow lake. We pushed on. The horsetails went down before the prow of the boat; but all around us the miniature forest remained erect. The moonlight sparkled on the ripples that we sent circling out through those perpendicular lines. And then the Lieutenant called out a note of warning, and Bell plunged her oars in the water just in time, for we had nearly run down two swans that were fast asleep in among the tall weeds.

We forsook this shallower end of the lake, and, with some more hissing of horsetails, pushed out and into the world of moonlight and still water; and then, as Tita took the oars, and just dipped them now and again to give us a sense of motion, Bell rested her guitar on her knee, and began to sing to us. What should she sing under the solitude of the hills, when all our laughter of dinner-time was over, and we were as silent as the lake itself? There was not even a breath of wind stirring; and it was in a very low voice, with something of a tremor in it, that Bell began to accompany the faint touching of the guitar.

"I've heard the lilting at our ewe-milking,"

—she sang, and her voice was so low and tremulous that Tita forgot to dip the oars into the water that she might listen to the girl—

"Lasses a lilting before the break o' day,
But now they are moaning on ilka green loaning—
The Flowers o' the Forest are a' wede away."

Had Grasmere ever listened to a more pathetic ballad, or to a tenderer voice? It was as well, perhaps, that the Lieutenant could not see Bell's face; for as she sang the last verse—

"We hear nae mair lilting at our ewe-milking;
Women and bairns are heartless and wae;
Sighing and moaning on ilka green loaning—
The Flowers o' the Forest are a' wede away,"

—there was a sort of indistinctness in her voice; and when the Lieutenant said that it was the finest English song that he had yet heard, and that the air was so very different from most of the old English tunes, she could not answer him for a minute or two.

But when she did answer him, fancy our astonishment!

"It isn't English," she said, with just a trace of contempt in her tone. "When did you find the English able to write a song or an air like that?"

"Grant me patience!" cries my Lady, with a fine theatrical appeal to the moonlight overhead. "This girl, because she was born in Westmoreland, claims the possession of everything north of the Trent."

"Are not you also English, Mademoiselle?" says the Lieutenant.

"I belong to the North Country," says Bell proudly; "and we are all the same race up here."

Now you should have seen how this cue was seized by the Lieutenant. The boy had about as much knowledge of the colonization of this country as most youths pick up at schools; but the manner in which he twisted it about to suit the wild and audacious statement that Bell had uttered was truly alarming. Before we knew where we were, we were plunged into the history of Strathclyde, and invited to consider the consistency of character that must have prevailed in the great Welsh kingdom that stretched from Dumbarton to Chester. We had also some pleasant little excursions into Bernicia and Deira, with abundance of proof that the Lowland Scotch speak the best English now going—a piece of information which we accepted with meekness. We were treated to a recapitulation of the settlements of the Angles, together with a learned disquisition on the aims of Ida. This was all very well. It passed the time. Bell thought she was firmly established in her position. Her traditional reverence for the "North Country" and all its belongings had, it turned out, some definite historical justification. She had a right to claim the songs of the Lowland Scotch; was she not herself of that favoured

race? At length, Queen Tita burst into a merry fit of laughter!

"I don't know what you mean to prove, Count von Rosen," she said; "you prove so much. At one time you insist that Bell is Scotch; at another time you show us that she must be Welsh, if all the people in Strathclyde were Welsh. But look at her, and what becomes of all the theories? There is no more English girl in all England than our Bell."

"That is no harm said of her," replied the Lieutenant, abandoning all his arguments at once.

"I suppose I am English," said Bell, obstinately, "but I am North-country English."

Nobody could dispute that; and doubtless the Lieutenant considered that Bell's division of this realm into districts mapped out in her imagination was of much more importance than the idle inquiries of historians into the German occupation of England. Then we pulled away over to the island, and round underneath the shadows of its firs, and back through the clear moonlight to the small jetty of the hotel. We entered the warm and comfortable building. The folks who had been dining had all gone into the drawing-room; but neither my Lady nor Bell seemed inclined to venture in among the strangers; and so we procured a private sitting-room, in which, by good luck, there was a piano.

The Lieutenant sat down.

"Madame," he said, "what shall I play to you? It is not since that I was at Twickenham I have touched a piano—oh, that is very bad English, I know, but I cannot help it."

"Sing the *rataplan* song that Bell was humming the other day," said Tita. "You two shall sing it—you shall be the old sergeant, and Bell the daughter of the regiment."

"Yes, I can sing it," he said; "but to play it—that I cannot do. It is too fine for my thick fingers."

And so he gave way to Bell, who played the accompaniment dexterously enough, and sang with a will. You would have fancied that the camp was really her birthplace, and that she was determined to march with the foremost, as the good song says. The Lieutenant had not half the martial ardour of this girl, who was singing of fire and slaughter, of battle and sudden death, as though she had been the eldest daughter of one of the kings of her native Strathclyde. And then, when she had finished that performance, it needed only the least suggestion of the Lieutenant to get her to sing Maria's next song, "*Ciascun lo dice*," so that you would have thought she had the spirit of the whole regiment within her. It is not a proper song. The brave Eleventh was doubtless a very gallant regiment; but why should they have taught their daughter to glorify their frightening of landlords, their flirtations, their fierce flying hither and thither, like the

famous Jäger that followed Holk? This is the regiment, Maria tells you, that fears nothing, but whom all men fear. This is the regiment beloved of women; for is not each soldier sure to become a Field-Marshal? The Lieutenant laughed at the warlike glow of her singing, but he was mightily pleased, for all that. She was fit to be a soldier's wife—this girl with the mantling colour in her cheek, and the brave voice and gallant mien. With colours in her cap, and a drum slung round her neck—with all the fathers of the regiment petting her, and proud of her, and ready to drive the soul out of the man who spoke a rude word to her—with her arch ways, and her frank bearing, and her loyal and loving regard for the brave Eleventh—why, Bell, for the moment, was really Maria, and as bright and as fearless as any Maria that ever sang "*rata-plan!*" Queen Tita was pleased too, but she was bound to play the part of the stately Marchioness. With an affectionate pat on the shoulder, she told Bell she mustn't sing any more of these soldier-songs; they were not improving songs. With which—just as if she had been ordered by the Marchioness to leave the brave Eleventh—Bell began to sing the plaintive and touching "*Convien partir.*" Perhaps we may have heard it better sung at Drury Lane. The song is known in Covent Garden. But if you had heard Bell sing it this night—with her lover sitting quite silent and embarrassed with a shamefaced pleasure, and with

a glimmer of moonlight on Grasmere visible through the open window—you might have forgiven the girl for her mistakes.

A notion may have crossed my Lady's mind that it was very hard on Arthur that Bell should in his absence have been singing these soldier-songs with so much obvious enjoyment. Was it fair that this young Uhlan should flutter his martial scarlet and blue and gold before the girl's eyes, and dazzle her with romantic pictures of a soldier's life? What chance had the poor law-student, coming out from his dingy chambers in the Temple, with bewildered eyes, and pale face, and the funereal costume of the ordinary English youth? We know how girls are attracted by show, how their hearts are stirred by the passing of a regiment with music playing and colours flying. The padded uniform may enclose a nutshell sort of heart, and the gleaming helmet or the imposing busby may surmount the feeblest sort of brain that could with decency have been put within a human skull; but what of that? Each featherbed warrior who rides from Knightsbridge to Whitehall, and from Whitehall to Knightsbridge, is gifted with the glorious traditions of great armies and innumerable campaigns; and in a ball-room the ass in scarlet is a far more attractive spectacle than the wise man in black. Perhaps Arthur was not the most striking example that might have been got to add point to the contrast; but if any such thoughts were running

through Queen Tita's mind, you may be sure that her sympathies were awakened for a young man whose chances of marrying Bell were becoming more and more nebulous.

And then my Lady sat down to the piano, and condescended to play for us a few pieces, with a precision and a delicacy of fingering which were far removed from Bell's performances in that way. I suppose you young fellows who read this would have regarded with indifference the dark-eyed little matron who sat there and unravelled the intricacies of the most difficult music. You would have kept all your attention for the girl who stood beside her; and you would have preferred the wilder and less finished playing of Bell, simply because she had fine eyes, pretty hair, a wholesome English pleasantness and frankness, and a proud and gracious demeanour. But a few years hence you may come to know better. You may get to understand the value of the quiet and unobtrusive ways of a woman who can look after a household, and busy herself with manifold charities, and bring up her children well and scrupulously, and yet have a tender smile for the vagaries of young folks like yourselves. And then, if it is your excellent fortune to have with you so gentle and fearless and honest a companion—if your own life seems to be but the half of the broader and fuller existence that abides beneath your roof—you may do worse than go

down on your knees and thank God who has blessed your house with the presence of a good wife and a good mother.

Tales shall not be told out of school. We may have sat a little late that night. We were harming no one by so doing, except ourselves; and if our health suffered by such late hours, we were prepared to let it suffer. For the fact was, we drifted into talk about our Surrey home; and now that seemed so far away —and it seemed so long since we had been there— that the most ordinary details of our bygone life in the south had grown picturesque. And from that Tita began to recall the names of the people she had known in the Lake district, in the old time, when Bell was but a girl, running about the valleys and hill-sides like a young goat. That, too, carried us back a long way, until it seemed as if we had drifted into a new generation of things that knew nothing of the good old times that were. There was a trifle of regret imported into this conversation—why, no one could tell; but when we broke up for the night, Tita's face was rather saddened, and she did not follow Bell when the girl called to her to look at the beautiful night outside, where the rapidly-sinking moon had given place to a host of stars that twinkled over the black gulf of Grasmere.

It is no wonder that lovers love the starlight, and the infinite variety and beauty and silence of the

strange darkness. But folks who have got beyond that period do not care so much to meet the mystery and the solemnity of the night. They may have experiences they would rather not recall. Who can tell what bitterness and grievous heart-wringing are associated with the wonderful peace and majesty of the throbbing midnight sky? The strong man, with all his strength fled from him, has gone out in his utter misery, and cried, "Oh, God, save my wife to me!" And the young mother, with her heart breaking, has looked up into the great abyss, and cried, "Oh, God, give me back my baby!" and all the answer they have had was the silence of the winds and the faint and distant glimmer of the stars. They do not care any more to meet the gaze of those sad, and calm, and impenetrable eyes.

CHAPTER IX.

ARTHUR'S SONG.

"Along the grass sweet airs are blown
Our way this day in Spring.
Of all the songs that we have known,
Now which one shall we sing?
Not that, my love, ah no!—
Not this, my love? why, so!—
Yet both were ours, but hours will come and go.

* * * * * *

"The branches cross above our eyes,
The skies are in a net:
And what's the thing beneath the skies
We two would most forget?
Not birth, my love, no no—
Not death, my love, no no.
The love once ours, but ours long hours ago."

We stood at the open window, my Lady, Bell, and I, with the calm lake lying before us as darkly blue as the heart of a bell-flower, and with the hills on the other side grown grey, and green, and hazy in the morning sunlight. Bell had brought us thither. The Lieutenant was outside, and we could hear him talking to some one, although he had no idea of our presence. Was it fair to steal a march on the young fellow, and seek to learn something of the method by which he became familiarly acquainted with every man, woman, and child we met on our journey? In such matters I look to Tita for guidance. If she says a certain thing is proper, it is proper. And at this moment she was standing just inside the curtains, listening, with a great amusement on her face, to the sounds which reached us from below.

"Ay, ah wur born in eighteen hunderd—that's a long time ago—a long time ago," said a quavering old voice, that was sometimes interrupted by a fit of asthmatic coughing; "and you don't remember the great comet—the comet of eighteen hunderd an' eleven! No! See that now! And ah wur a boy at that time; but I can remember the great comet of eighteen hunderd an' eleven—I remember it well now—and ah wur born in eighteen hunderd. How long ago is that now?"

"Why, that's easily counted," said the Lieutenant; "that's seventy-one years ago. But you look as hale and as fresh as a man of forty."

"Seventy-one—ay, that it is—and you don't remember the comet of eighteen hunderd an' eleven?"

"No, I don't. But how have you kept your health and your colour all this time? That is the air of the mountains gives you this good health, I suppose."

"Lor bless ye, ah don't belong to these parts. No. Ah wur born in the New Forest, in eighteen hunderd—Ringwood, that's the place—that's in the New Forest, a long way from eear. Do you know Ringwood?"

"No."

"Nor Poole?"

"No."

"Lor bless ye! Never been to Poole! Do ye know Southampton?"

"No."

"Bless my soul! Never been to Poole? There now? And you don't know Southampton, where all the ships are?—ay, a famous sight o' ships, I can tell ye. And you've never been to Southampton—Lor bless ye, you ain't much of a traveller! But there now, ain't you a Frenchman?"

"No."

"Go along with you! Not a Frenchman? An' you don't know Poole? It's a big place, Poole, and ah reckon it's grown bigger now, for it's many a year ago since ah wur there. When ah wur a boy—that's many a year ago—for ah remember well the great comet, in eighteen hunderd an' eleven—you don't remember that? No! God bless my soul, you're only a boy yet—and ah wur born seventy year ago—and when ah went up to Lunnon, ah wur such a simple chap!"

We could hear the old man laughing and chuckling, until a fit of coughing seized him, and then he proceeded:—

"Ah wur taking a bridle down to my mahster, and what's the bridge you go over? Dear me, dear me! my memory isn't as good as it once was——"

And at this point the old man stopped, and puzzled, and hesitated about the name of the bridge, until the Lieutenant besought him never to mind that, but to go on with his story. But no. He would find out the name of the bridge; and after having repeated

twenty times that he was born in 1800, and could remember the comet of 1811, he hit upon the name of Blackfriars.

"An' there wur a chap standin' there, as come up to me and asked me if I would buy a silk handkerchief from him. He had two of 'em—Lor bless ye, you don't know what rare good handkerchiefs we had then—white, you know, wi' blue spots on 'em—they're all gone out now, for it's many a year ago. And that chap he thought ah'd bin sellin' a oss; and he made up to me, and he took me into a small public-'ouse, close by, and says he, 'Ah'll be sworn a smart young fellow like you'll 'ave a tidy bit o' money in your pocket.' An' ah wur a smart young fellow then, as he said, but, God bless you, that's many a year ago; an' now, would you believe it, that chap got five shillins out o' me for two of his handkerchiefs—he did indeed, as sure as I'm alive. Wasn't it a shame to take in a poor country chap as wur up doing a job for his mahster?"

"Five shillings for two silk handkerchiefs with blue spots?" said the Lieutenant. "Why, it was you who did swindle that poor man. It is you that should be ashamed. And you took away the bridle safe?"

"Ay, ah wur goin' down to Winchester. Do ye know Winchester?"

"No."

"Ha, ha, ha! Ah thought not! No, nor Poole? Have you ever been to Bristol—there now!"

"My dear friend, there are few men so great travellers as you have been. You should not boast of it."

"But, Lor bless ye, don't ye know the ships at Poole? And Winchester—that's a fine town, too, is Winchester. Ah'd a month at Winchester when ah wur a young man."

"A month! What do you mean by that?"

"Yes, that ah did. Lor, they were far stricter then than they are now."

"But what was this month you are speaking about?"

"Don't ye know what a month in jail is for ketchin a rabbit?"

"Oh, it was a rabbit, was it?"

The wicked old man laughed and chuckled again.

"Ay," said he, "ah got one month for ketchin one rabbit, but if they'd 'ave gi'en me a month for every rabbit and hare as ah've ketched, Lor bless ye!—you young fellows now-a-days know nothin'! You're simple chaps, that's what it is! Have you ever heard of the great comet of eighteen hunderd an' eleven? There now! And the crowds as come out to see it—stretchin' out—long—jest as it might be the long gown as mothers put on young things when they're carried about—and that wur in eighteen 'underd an' eleven. But I'm gettin' old now, and stiff—and them rheu-

matics they do trouble one so when they come on bad in the night-time. I'm not what I was at your age—you'll be thirty now, or forty mayhap?"

"Nearer thirty."

"Ah never 'ad so much hair as you—it wur never the fashion to wear hair on the face at that time."

"And you followed the fashion, of course, when you were a young fellow, and went courting the girls. Yes?"

This hint seemed to wake up the old man into a high state of glee; and as he began to tell of his exploits in this direction, he introduced so many unnecessary ejaculations into his talk that my Lady somewhat hastily withdrew, dragging Bell with her. The old rogue outside might have been with our army in Flanders, to judge by the force of his conversation; and the stories that he told of his wild adventures in such distant regions as Poole and Southampton showed that his memory treasured other recollections than that of the 1811 comet. How the conversation ended I do not know; but by and by von Rosen came in to breakfast.

It is a shame for two women to have a secret understanding between them, and look as if they could scarcely keep from smiling, and puzzle a bashful young man by enigmatical questions.

"Madame," said the Lieutenant, at last, "I am very stupid. I cannot make out what you mean."

"And neither can she," observes one who hates to see a worthy young man bothered by two artful women. "Her joke is like the conundrum that was so good that the man who made it, after trying for two years and a half to find out what it meant, gave it up and cut his throat. Don't you heed them. Cut the salad, like a good fellow, and let Bell put in the oil, and the vinegar, and what not. Now, if that girl would only take out a patent for her salad-dressing, we should all be rolling in wealth directly."

"I should call it the Nebuchadnezzar," said Bell.

My Lady pretended not to hear that remark, but she was very angry; and all desire of teasing the Lieutenant had departed from her face, which was serious and reserved. Young people must not play pranks with Scripture names, in however innocent a fashion.

"It is a very good thing to have salad at breakfast," said the Lieutenant; "although it is not customary in your country. It is very fresh, very pleasant, very wholesome in the morning. Now, if one were to eat plenty of salad, and live in this good mountain air, one might live a long time——"

"One might live to remember the comet of eighteen 'underd an' eleven," observed Bell, with her eyes cast down.

The Lieutenant stared for a moment; and then he burst into a roar of laughter.

"I have discovered the joke," he cried. "It is that

you did listen to that old man talking to me. Oh, he was a very wicked old person——"

And here, all at once, von Rosen stopped. A great flush of red sprung to the young fellow's face—he was evidently contemplating with dismay the possibility of my Lady having overheard all the dragoon-language of the old man.

"We heard only up to a certain point," says Madame, sedately. "When he began to be excited, Bell and I withdrew."

The Lieutenant was greatly relieved. The septuagenarian was not a nice person for ladies to listen to. Indeed, in one direction he was amply qualified to have written a "*Dialogue between a Man and a Cat: being a discussion as to which would like to use the most bad language when the tail of the latter is trodden upon.*" Such an essay would be instructive in results, but objectionable in tone.

All this while we had heard nothing of Arthur. That morning when Tita sent down to inquire if there were any letters for us at the post-office and found there were none, she must needs send an urgent telegram to Twickenham, to see if the young man's parents knew anything of his whereabouts. Of course they could not possibly know. Doubtless he was on his way to Carlisle. Perhaps we should have the pleasure of meeting him in Edinburgh.

But this indefinite postponement of the coming of

Arthur was a grievous irritation to the Lieutenant. It was no relief to him that his rival was disposed to remain absent. The very odd position in which he was now placed made him long for any result that would put an end to his suspense; and I think he was as anxious about seeing Arthur as any of us,—that is to say, presuming Arthur to be certain to come sooner or later. If it should happen that the dog-cart had been upset—but there is no use in speculating on the horrible selfishness that enters into the hearts of young men who are in love and jealous.

All these things and many more the young Prussian revealed to the sympathetic silence of Grasmere and the fair green mountains around, as he and I set out for a long walk. The women had gone to pay visits in the village and its neighbourhood. It seemed a pity to waste so beautiful a day in going into a series of houses; but my Lady was inexorable whenever she established to her own satisfaction that she owed a certain duty.

The Lieutenant bade Bell good-bye with a certain sadness in his tone. He watched them go down the white road, in the glare of the sunshine, and then he turned with a listless air to set out on his pilgrimage into the hills. Of what avail was it that the lake out there shone a deep and calm blue under the clear sky, that the reflection of the wooded island was perfect as the perfect mirror, and that the far hills had

drawn around them a thin tremulous veil of silver gauze under the strong heat of the sun? The freshness of the morning—when a light breeze blew over from the west, and stirred the reeds of the lake, and awoke a white ripple in by the shore—had no effect in brightening up his face. He was so busy talking of Bell, and of Arthur, and of my Lady, that it was with a serene unconsciousness he allowed himself to be led away from the lake into the lonely regions of the hills.

Even a hardy young Uhlan finds his breath precious when he is climbing a steep green slope, scrambling up shelves of loose earth and slate, and clinging on to bushes to help him in his ascent. There were interruptions in this flow of lovers' complainings. After nearly an hour's climbing, von Rosen had walked and talked Bell out of his head; and as he threw himself on a slope of Rydal Fell, and pulled out a flask of sherry and his cigar-case, he laughed aloud, and said—

"No, I had no notion we were so high. Hee! that is a view—one does not see that often in my country—all houses and men swept away—you are alone in the world—and all around is nothing but mountains and lakes."

Indeed, there was away towards the south a network of hill and water that no one but Bell would have picked to pieces for us—thin threads of silver

lying in long valleys, and mounds upon mounds rising up into the clear blue sky that sloped down to the white line of the sea. Coniston we could make out, and Windermere we knew. Esthwaite we guessed at; but of what avail was guessing, when we came to that wild and beautiful panorama beyond and around?

The Lieutenant's eyes went back to Grasmere.

"How long is it you think Madame will pay her visits?"

"Till the afternoon, probably. They will lunch with some of their friends."

"And we—do we climb any more mountains?"

"This is not a mountain—it is a hill. We shall climb or go down again, just as you please."

"There is nothing else to do but to wait if we go down?"

"I suppose you mean waiting for the ladies to return—no; our going down won't bring them back a minute the sooner."

"Then—let us go on, anywhere."

We had a long, aimless, and devious wandering that day among the grassy slopes and peaks of Rydal Fell, until we at length came down by the gorge through which Rydal Beck plunges, foaming into the valley below. Wherever we went, the Lieutenant seemed chiefly to be concerned in making out the chief places of beauty which we should bring the women to see on the morrow—as if Bell did not know

Rydal Beck and all its falls as well as she knew Walton Heath. And then we got down the winding road by Rydal Mount, and walked leisurely back by Rydal Water to Grasmere.

What was this that confronted us as we went into the hotel, and went forward to the large windows? The sun was lying brightly on the hills, and the lake, and the garden in front of us; and on the lawn—which was a blaze of bright colour—three figures stood, throwing jet-black shadows on the green. Von Rosen stared, as well he might stare. For there were Bell and Tita, engaged in earnest and interesting talk with a young man; and the young man was Arthur.

For a second or two the Lieutenant did not utter a word; but presently he remarked, with a fine affectation of carelessness—

"Have they had lunch, do you think?"

"Let us go and see," I say; and so our Uhlan stalks gloomily out into the garden.

Our appearance seemed to cause great embarrassment to the party on the lawn. Arthur, with a flush on his face, greeted us stiffly; and then he suddenly turned to Queen Tita, and continued his talk with her in an ostentatiously impressive manner, as though he would give us to understand that he would take no more notice of us. Bell, apparently, had been rather left out in the cold. Perhaps she was a little vexed—for even the most amiable of girls have their notions

of pride—and so what must she do but immediately turn to the Lieutenant and ask him with much friendliness all about his forenoon's ramble.

If thankfulness, and kindliness, and all the modest and grateful respect of love were ever written on a young man's face, they dwelt in the eyes of our Uhlan as he was almost struck dumb by this signal mark of Bell's condescension. He took no great advantage of the permission accorded to him. He did not seek to draw her away. In fact, after telling Mademoiselle, with his eyes cast down, that he hoped she would come next day to see all that we had seen, he placed the burden of explanation on me, who would rather have sat in the back benches and looked from a distance at this strange comedy.

But the effect upon Arthur of this harmless conduct of Bell's was what might have been expected. When we turned to go into the hotel for luncheon, he was talking in rather a loud way, with a fine assumption of cynicism. He had not much to tell of his adventures, for the reason of his coming up so late was merely that the cob had gone a little lame, and had been brought with some care to Kendal, where it was to have a couple of days' rest—but his conversation took far wider sweeps than that. The climax of it came when we were sitting at table. All this time the lad had not addressed a word to Bell; but now he suddenly observed—

"You remember that song of Lover's you used to sing, about the white sails flowing?"

"Yes," said Bell—she had often sung it to him at his own request.

"It is a pretty song," said he, with rather a ghastly smile; "but I heard a version of it the other night that I thought was a good deal truer. Shall I try to repeat the verses?"

"Yes, do," says Queen Titania, with no great cordiality in her tone. She half anticipated what was coming.

"This is the first verse," said the young man, glancing rather nervously at Bell, and then instantly withdrawing his eyes:—

"What will you do, love, when I am going,
With white sails flowing, the seas beyond?
What will you do, love, when waves divide us,
And friends may chide us, for being fond?"

"When waves divide us, and friends are chiding,
Afar abiding, I'll think anew;
And I'll take another devoted lover,
And I'll kiss him as I kissed you."

A frightful silence prevailed. We all of us knew that the reckless young man was rushing on self-destruction. Could he have devised a more ingenious method of insulting Bell? He proceeded:—

"What will you do, love, if distant tidings
Thy fond confidings should undermine?
And I abiding 'neath sultry skies
Should think other eyes were as bright as thine?"

"Ah, joyful chance! If guilt or shame
Were round thy name, could I be true?
For I'd take the occasion, without much persuasion,
To have another flirtation—that's what I'd do."

If there are angels who watch over the fortunes of unhappy lovers, surely they must have wept at this moment. These foolish verses—and another one which fear of my Lady prevents my publishing here—were the actual outcome of all the rebellious thoughts that had been rankling in his mind like poison during these last few days. Along the lonely highway, this was the devil's dirge he had been crooning to himself. He had fed on its unholy bitterness as he sat in remote inns, and pictured to himself, with a fierce satisfaction, the scene in which he would recite the lines to Bell, before the whole of us.

And now the deed was done. He sat silent for a moment; and we were all of us silent. A waiter said, "Sherry, sir?" behind his ear, and he started. And then Queen Tita turned to von Rosen, and asked him if he had seen Rydal Mount.

It was a pitiable thing. In public life a man may force himself into the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, or some such office, by departing into a Cave of Adullam and marshalling the discontented around him; but in love affairs, how is a man to profit by an exhibition of angry passion and recklessness? Force is of no avail, threatening is as idle as the wind. And there was something even more cruel than threatening

in this recitation of the young man's, as only those who were familiar with our life in Surrey could understand. What might come of it no one could tell.

[*Note by Queen Titania.*—"I am no judge of what ought to be placed before the public—I leave that to those whose sense of *good taste* and *proper feeling* is probably better than mine. But if these most *impertinent* verses are to be published, I have to say that the implication contained in the first verse is cruelly *false.* To hint that Bell could have thought of kissing either Arthur or the Lieutenant—or would have done so if they were *Princes of the Blood*—is most unjust and insulting to a girl whose pride and self-respect no one has ever dared to impeach. It is all very well for a stupid young man to say such things in a fit of *ungovernable rage;* but what I know is that Bell cried very much about it, when she spoke to me about it afterwards. And both my husband and Count von Rosen sat still, and never said a word. If *I* had been a man, I think I should have told Arthur very plainly what I thought of his *very pretty conduct.* But I suppose they considered it a jest; for I have frequently found that the notions of gentlemen about what is humorous are a *little peculiar.*"]

CHAPTER X.

ARMAGEDDON.

"Let us go hence, my songs; she will not hear.
Let us go hence together without fear;
Keep silence now, for singing-time is over,
And over all old things and all things dear.
She loves not you nor me as all we love her.
Yea, though we sang as angels in her ear,
She would not hear."

BLOW, wind, and shriek, tempests! Let all the gases be lowered, and thunder roll through the gloom! Tremble, ye forests of canvas, where twisted oaks and shattered elms bear witness to the agony of the scene; and let the low music of the violoncello and the

throbbing of muffled drums announce that dreadful deeds are brewing! Alas! we had no such thrilling accompaniments to the tragedy being enacted before our eyes on the fair shores of Grasmere. The lake lay as blue and as calm as though no perplexed and suffering human souls were by its side; and instead of the appropriate darkness of a theatre, we had the far hills trembling under the white haze of the mid-day heat. Yet my Lady saw none of these things. Her heart was rent asunder by the troubles of the young folks under her charge: until I seemed to see in her speechless eyes a sort of despairing wish that she had never been born.

"And yet," I say to her, "you don't see the worst of it. If Arthur is driven away by Bell, a far more terrible thing will befall him."

"What?" says Queen Titania, with the clear, brown eyes grown solemn.

"He will marry somebody else."

"Bah!" she says peevishly; "is this the time to be thinking of jests?"

"Indeed, I know one who never discovered the joke of it. But don't you think that he will?"

"I wish he would."

"There's little Katty Tatham, now, would give her ears to marry him."

"You always fancy girls are very anxious to marry."

"I never asked but one, and I found her ready enough."

"I refused you."

"You made a pretence of doing so."

"I wish I had kept to my first resolution."

"I wish you had, since you say so. But that's of no consequence. I saved you from committing suicide, as I have frequently told you."

The small creature looks up, and with an excellent calmness and self-composure, says—

"I suppose you never heard of a young man—I thought him very silly at the time, myself—who walked about all night, one night at Eastbourne; and in the morning—long before my mamma was up—aroused the servants, and sent in a letter—a sort of ultimatum it was—with all sorts of vows of vengeance and despair. That young man wasn't Arthur Ashburton; but when you complain of Arthur's mad follies——"

"Madam," I say to her, "your sex protects you. Go and live. But when you say that *I* complain of Arthur, and in the next breath accuse me of always bringing forward excuses for him——"

But what was the use of continuing the argument? My Lady smiles with a fine air of triumph; confident that her ingenious logic had carried the day, as, in fact, it generally does. The man who endeavours to follow, seize, and confront the airy statements made by a lady in a difficulty, resembles nothing so much

as a railway-train trying to catch a butterfly; and who would not back the butterfly?

We were now placed in an uncommonly awkward fix. The arrival of Arthur at Grasmere had produced a complication such as we had not dreamt of; for now it appeared as if the situation were to be permanent. We had somehow fancied that, as soon as he overtook us, some definite arrangement would be come to, settling at once and for ever those rival pretensions which were interfering with our holiday in a serious manner. At last, my Lady had considered, the great problem was to be finally solved; and, of course, the solution lay in Bell's hands. But, now Arthur had come, who was to move in the matter? It was not for Bell, at all events, to come forward and say to one of the young men "Go!" and to the other "Stay!" Neither of them, on the other hand, seemed disposed to do anything bold and heroic in order to rid us of this grievous embarrassment; and so the first afternoon passed away—with some more walking, visiting, and boating—in a stolidly and hopelessly reserved and dreary fashion.

But every one of us knew that a mine lay close by, and that at any moment a match might be flung into it. Every word that was uttered was weighed beforehand. As for Tita, the poor little woman was growing quite pale and fatigued with her constant and nervous anxiety; until one of the party privately told

her that if no one else asked Bell to marry, he would himself, and so end our troubles.

"I don't know what to do," she said, sitting down and folding her hands on her knees, while there was quite a pitiable expression on her face. "I am afraid to leave them for a moment. Perhaps now they may be fighting—but that does not much matter, for Bell can't have gone downstairs to dinner yet. Don't you think you could get Arthur to go away?"

"Of what use would that be? He went away before; and then we had our steps dogged, and letters and telegrams in every town. No; let us have it out here."

"I wish you and he would have it out between you. That poor girl is being frightened to death."

"Say but one brief word, my dear, and Arthur will be feeding the fishes among the reeds of Grasmere before the morning. But would you really like Bell to send Arthur off? Is he really to be told that she won't marry him? They used to be pets of yours. I have seen you regard them, as they walked before us along the lanes, with an amiable and maternal smile. Is it all over? Would you like him to go away and never see us any more?"

"Oh, I don't know;" cries Tita, with the anxiety and pity and tenderness in her eyes almost grown into tears.

That was a nice little project of hers with which

we had started from the old tavern in Holborn. It had been tolerably successful. If Bell were not in love with the Lieutenant, there could be no doubt, at least, that the Lieutenant was hopelessly and over head and ears in love with Bell. It was a pretty comedy for a time; and my Lady had derived an infinite pleasure and amusement from watching the small and scarcely perceptible degrees by which the young folks got drawn towards each other. What would have been the beautiful pictures of English scenery we had driven through, without two young lovers in the foreground, trying to read their fate in each other's eyes, and affording us elderly folks all manner of kindly and comic reminiscences?

It had all turned out very well; until, suddenly, came the revelation that the greatest happiness of the greatest number had demanded a human victim; and here he was before us, with gory locks and piteous eyes, demanding justice. Never before had my Lady fully realized what was meant in the final sending away of Arthur; and now that she saw before her all the consequences of her schemes, she was struck to the heart, and dared scarcely ask for some re-assurance as to what she had done.

"Oh," she says, "I hope I have done right."

"You! Why should you assume any responsibility? Let the young folks arrange their own affairs as they like best. Do you think, if Bell had been willing to

break with Arthur, that your packing off the Lieutenant to Germany would prevent her making the acquaintance of some other man? And she has not broken off with Arthur. If she does so, she does so, and there's an end of it; but why should you vex yourself about it?"

She was not to be comforted. She shook her head, and continued to sit there with her eyes full of anxious cares. When at length she went off to dress hastily for dinner, it was with a determination that from that moment she would endeavour to help Arthur in every way she could. That was the form her repentance took.

If the young man had only known that he had secured such a valuable ally! But just at this time —amid all our perplexity as to who should first precipitate matters—what should the reckless fellow do but startle us all with a declaration which wholly altered the aspect of affairs!

We were seated at dinner. It was in the private room we had engaged; and the evening light, reflected from the lake outside, was shining upon Tita's gentle face as she sat at the head of the table. Bell was partly in shadow. The two young men, by some fatal mischance, sat next each other: probably because neither wished to take the unfair advantage offered by the empty seat next to Bell.

Well, something had occurred to stir up the

smouldering fires of Arthur's wrath. He had been treated with great and even elaborate courtesy by everybody—but more particularly by Bell—during our afternoon rambles; but something had evidently gone wrong. There was a scowl on the fair and handsome face that was naturally pleasant, boyish, and agreeable in appearance. He maintained a strict silence for some little time after dinner was served; although my Lady strove to entice him into the general talk. But presently he looked up, and, addressing her, said in a forcedly merry way—

"Should you like to be startled?"

"*Yes*, *please*," Tita would probably have said—so anxious is she to humour everybody; but just then he added, in the same reckless and defiant tone—

"What if I tell you I am going to get married?"

An awful consternation fell upon us.

"Oh," says my Lady, in a hurried fashion, "you are joking, Arthur."

"No, I am not. And when I present the young lady to you, you will recognize an old friend of yours, whom you haven't seen for years."

To put these words down on paper can give no idea whatever of the ghastly appearance of jocularity which accompanied them, nor of the perfectly stunning effect they produced. The women were appalled into silence. Von Rosen stared, and indifferently played with the stem of his wine-glass. For mere charity's

sake, I was driven into filling up this horrible vacuum of silence; and so I asked—with what show of appropriateness married people may judge—whether he had formed any plans for the buying of furniture.

Furniture! 'Tis an excellent topic. Everybody can say something about it. My Lady, with a flash of gratitude in her inmost soul, seized upon the cue, and said—

"Oh, Arthur, have you seen our sideboard?"

Now, when a young man tells you he is about to get married, it is rather an odd thing to answer "*Oh, Arthur*—or Tom, or Dick, or Harry, as the case may be—*have you seen our sideboard?*" But all that my Lady wanted was to speak; for Arthur, having accomplished his intention of startling us, had relapsed into silence.

"Of course he has seen the sideboard," I say for him. "He was familiar with the whole of that fatal transaction."

"Why fatal?" says the Lieutenant.

You see, we were getting on.

"Bell will tell you the history. No? Then I will —for the benefit of all folks who may have to furnish a house; and I hope Arthur—after the very gratifying announcement he has just made—will take heed."

"Oh, yes," says Arthur, gaily, "let us have all your experience about house matters. It is never too soon to learn."

"Very well. There was once a sideboard which lived in Dorking——"

Here the Lieutenant begged to know what piece of furniture a sideboard was; and when that was explained to him, the legend was continued:—

"It was a very grand old sideboard of carved oak, which had regarded the dinner-parties of several generations from its recess. At last it had to be sold at public auction. A certain agreeable and amiable lady, who lives on the banks of the river Mole, saw this sideboard, and was told she might have it for a trifle of ninety-five guineas. She is an impressionable person. The sideboard occupied her thoughts day and night; until at last her husband—who is the most obliging person in the world, and has no other desire in life than to obey her wishes——"

Here there were some interruptions at the further end of the table. Silence having been restored, the speaker went on to say that the sideboard was bought.

"It was the beginning of the troubles of that wretched man. When you have an old oak sideboard that farmers' wives will drive twenty miles to look at, you must have old oak chairs. When you have old oak chairs, a microcephalous idiot would know that you must have an old oak table. By slow degrees the home of this unhappy man underwent transformation. Rooms that had been familiar to him, and homely,

became gloomy halls from which ghosts of a cheerful temperament would have fled in despair. People came to dinner, and sat in the high-backed chairs with an expression of resigned melancholy on their faces; and now and again an unlucky lady of weight and dimensions would, on trying to rise from the table, tilt up the chair and save herself from falling by clinging to the arm of the man next her. For of course you can't have castors on old oak chairs, and when the stumps of wood have got well settled into the thick Turkey carpet, how is the chair to be sent back?"

"That is quite absurd," says a voice. "Everyone says our dining-room chairs are exceedingly comfortable."

"Yours are; but this is another matter. Now the lady of the house did not stop at oak furniture and solemn carpets and severe curtains. She began to dress herself and her children to match her furniture. She cut the hair of her own babes to suit that sideboard. There was nothing heard of but broad lace collars, and black velvet garments, and what not; so that the boys might correspond with the curtains and not be wholly out of keeping with the chairs. She made a dress for her own mother, which that estimable lady contemplated with profound indignation, and asked how she could be expected to appear in decent society in a costume only fit for a fancy ball."

"It was a most beautiful dress, wasn't it, Bell?" says a voice.

"But far worse was to come. She began to acquire a taste for everything that was old and marvellous. She kept her husband for hours stifling in the clammy atmosphere of Soho, while she ransacked dirty shops for scraps of crockery that were dear in proportion to their ugliness. During these hours of waiting he thought of many things—suicide among the number. But what he chiefly ruminated on was the pleasing and ingenious theory that in decoration everything that is old is genuine, and everything that is new is meretricious. He was not a person of profound accomplishments——"

"Hear, hear!" says a voice.

——"and so he could not understand why he should respect the intentions of artists who, a couple of centuries ago, painted fans, and painted them badly, and why he should treat with scorn the intentions of artists who at this moment paint fans and paint them well. He could not acquire any contempt for a French vase in gold and white and rose-colour, even when it was put beside a vase some three hundred years of age which was chiefly conspicuous by its defective curves and bad colour. As for Italian mirrors and blue and white china, he received without emotion the statement that all the world of London was wildly running after these things. He bore meekly the con-

temptuous pity bestowed on him when he expressed the belief that modern Venetian glass was, on the whole, a good deal more beautiful than any he had seen of the old, and when he proposed to buy some of it as being more within the means of an ordinary person. But when at last—after having waited a mortal hour in a dingy hole in a dingy thoroughfare near Leicester Square—he was goaded into rebellion, and declared that he did not care a brass farthing, nor even the half of that sum, when an object of art was made, how it was made, where it was made, or by whom it was made, so long as it fulfilled its first duty of being good in design and workmanship and agreeable to the eye—it seemed to him that the end of his conjugal happiness was reached. Nothing short of a legal separation could satisfy the injured feelings of his wife. That she should have to live with this Goth and outer barbarian seemed to her monstrous. But at this time it occurred to her that she might find some use for even such a creature, considering that he was still possessed of a little money——"

"You seldom omit to bring that forward," says the voice.

——"and that there was a drawing-room to be transformed. Then he beheld strange things. Phantom curtains of black and gold began to steal into the house. Hidden mysteries dwelt in the black, yellow, and red of the carpet; and visitors paused upon the

threshold for a moment to collect their wits, after the first stun of looking in. Then all the oil of Greenland was unable to light up this gloomy chamber in the evening; and so there came down from London mighty sheets of mirrors to be let into the walls. 'Now,' said this reckless woman to her husband, 'we must have a whole series of dinner-parties to ask everybody to come and see what the house looks like.'"

"Oh, what a story!" cries that voice again. "Bell, did you ever hear the like of that? I wonder he does not say we put the prices on the furniture and invited the people to look at the cost. You don't believe it, do you, Count von Rosen?"

"No, Madame," said the Lieutenant; "I do not believe any lady exists such as that one which he describes."

"But he means me," says Tita.

"Then what shall I say?" continues the young man. "May I say that I have never seen—not in England, not in Germany—any rooms so beautifully arranged in the colours as yours? And it was all your own design? Ha!—I know he is calling attention to that for the purpose of complimenting you—that is it."

Of course, that mean-spirited young man took every opportunity of flattering and cajoling Bell's chief adviser; but what if he had known at this

moment that she had gone over to the enemy, and mentally vowed to help Arthur by every means in her power?

She could not do much for him that evening. After dinner we had a little music, but there was not much life or soul in it. Arthur could sing an ordinary drawing-room song as well as another, and we half expected him to reveal his sorrows in that way, but he coldly refused. The Lieutenant, at my Lady's urgent request, sat down to the piano and sang the song that tells of the maiden who lived "im Winkel am Thore;" but there was an absence of that spontaneity which generally characterized his rough and ready efforts in music, and after missing two of the verses, he got over his task with an air of relief. It was very hard that the duty of dispelling the gloom should have been thrown on Bell; but when once she sat down and struck one or two of those minor chords which presaged one of the old ballads, we found a great refuge from our embarrassment. We were in another world then—with Chloe plaiting flowers in her hair, and Robin hunting in the greenwood with his fair lady, who was such a skilful archer, and all the lasses and lads kissing each other round the May-pole. With what a fine innocence Bell sang of these merry goings-on! I daresay a good many well-conducted young persons would have stopped with the stopping of the dancing, and never told what hap-

pened after the fiddler had played "Packington's Pound" and "Sellinger's Round." But our Bell, with no thought of harm, went merrily on—

"Then after an hour
They went to a bower,
And played for ale and cakes,
And kisses too—
Until they were due
The lasses held the stakes.
The girls did then begin
To quarrel with the men,
And bid them take their kisses back
And give them their own again!"

In fact, there was a very bright smile of amusement on her face, and you could have fancied that her singing was on the point of breaking into laughter; for how could the girl know that my Lady was looking rather reserved at the mention of that peculiar sort of betting? But then the concluding verse comes back to the realms of propriety; and Bell sang it quite gently and tenderly, as though she, too, were bidding good-bye to her companions in a frolic:—

"'Good night,' says Harry;
'Good night,' says Mary;
'Good night,' says Dolly to John;
'Good night,' says Sue
To her sweetheart Hugh;
'Good night,' says every one.
Some walked, and some did run,
Some loitered on the way,
And bound themselves by kisses twelve
To meet next holiday—
And bound themselves by kisses twelve
To meet next holiday!"

"Mademoiselle," said von Rosen, coming forward to her with quite a paternal air, "you must not sing any more to-night. You are always too ready to sing for us—and you do not reflect of the fatigue." And as Bell stood rather embarrassed by this exhibition of thoughtfulness, and as Arthur glowered gloomily out from his corner, the Lieutenant made some excuse for himself and me, and presently we found ourselves out by the shores of the lake, smoking a contemplative cigar under the clear starlight.

"Now, my good friend," he said, suddenly, "tell me—is it a lie, yes?"

"Is what a lie?"

"That foolish story that he will be married."

"Oh, you mean Arthur. I had almost forgotten what he said at dinner. Well, perhaps it is a lie—young men in love are always telling lies about something or other."

"Heh!" says the Lieutenant, peevishly; "you do know it is not true. How can it be true?"

"Of course you want me to say that I think it true—you boys are so unreasonable. I don't know anything about it. I don't care. If he wants to marry some girl or other, I hope he may. The wish is perhaps not very friendly——"

"Now look at this!" says the Lieutenant, quite fiercely, and in a voice so loud that I was afraid it might reach the windows of the hotel that were now

sending a yellow light over the lawn: "if he means to marry some other young lady, why is he here? He has no business here. Why does he come here to annoy everyone and make himself miserable? He ought to go away; and it is you that should send him away."

"Bless me! Surely a man may come and stop at an hotel at Grasmere without asking my permission. I have no right to forbid Arthur remaining in Westmoreland or any other county. He does not ask me to pay his bills."

"This that Madame says it is quite true, then," says the Lieutenant, angrily, "that you care only for your own comfort!"

"When Madame says such things, my good friend, she retains the copyright. Don't let her hear you repeating them, if you are wise, or you'll get into trouble. As for myself, this cigar is excellent, and you may let your vexation take any shape that is handy. I foresaw that we should soon have two Arthurs in the field."

The tall young soldier walked up and down for a minute or two, evidently in great distress, and at last he stopped, and said, in a very humble voice—

"My dear friend, I beg your pardon. I do not know what I say when I see this pitiful fellow causing so much pain to your wife and to Mademoiselle.

Now, when you look at them—not at me at all—will not you endeavour to do something?"

He was no great hand at diplomacy, this perplexed and stammering Uhlan, who seemed bent on inflicting his anger on his cigar. To introduce the spectacle of two suffering women so as to secure the banishment of his rival was a very transparent device, and might have provoked laughter, but that Grasmere is deep, and a young man in love exceedingly irritable.

"He says he is going to marry some other girl: what more would you like? You don't want to carry off all his sweethearts from the unfortunate youth?"

"But it is not true."

"Very well."

"And you talk of carrying off his sweetheart. Mademoiselle was never his sweetheart, I can assure you of that; and besides I have not carried her off, nor am likely to do that, so long as this wretched fellow hangs about, and troubles her much with his complainings. Now, if she will only say to me that I may send him away, I will give you my word he is not in this part of the country, no, not one day longer."

"Take care. You can't commit murder in this country with impunity, except in one direction. You may dispose of your wife as you please; but if you murder any reasonable being, you will suffer."

Indeed, the Lieutenant, pacing up and down the narrow path by the lake, looked really as if he would have liked to catch Arthur up and dash him against Mercator's Projection, or some other natural phenomenon; and the more he contemplated his own helplessness in the matter, the more he chafed and fumed. The moon rose slowly from behind the hills, and ran along the smooth surface of the lake, and found him nursing this volcano of wrath in his breast. But suddenly, as he looked up, he saw the blind of one of the hotel-windows thrust aside, and he knew that Bell was there, contemplating the wonderful beauties of the sky. He ceased his growlings. A more human expression came over his face; and then he proposed that we should go in, lest the ladies should want to say good-night.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LAST OF GRASMERE.

"Muss aus dem Thal jetzt scheiden,
Wo alles Lust und Klang;
Das ist mein herbstes Leiden,
Mein letzter Gang!
Dich, mein stilles Thal,
Grüss' ich tausend Mal!
Das ist mein herbstes Leiden,
Mein letzter Gang!"

A STILL greater surprise was in store for us next morning. My Lady had taken leave to discredit altogether the story of Arthur's approaching marriage.

She regarded it as merely the wild and reckless utterance of vexation. For the young man's sake, she hoped that no one would make any allusion to this topic, and that he himself would allow it to fall into the rapidly running waters of oblivion.

Now, he had on the previous day despatched a message to Kendal to the effect that the dog-cart should be at once sent to him, if the cob had quite recovered. He proposed to accompany us as far as Penrith or Carlisle; further than that he said he did not care to go. But as the trap was likely to arrive that forenoon, and as he had to see the man who would bring it, he begged us to start for our forenoon's walk by ourselves—a proposal which was accepted with equanimity by the whole of our party. The young man was quite complaisant. My Lady was very attentive to him; and we thought we should start for our ramble with the consciousness that we had left behind us no wretched creature eating away his heart with thoughts of revenge.

Somehow this mood passed rapidly away from him. The spectacle of Bell and the Lieutenant planning with a great joy the outline of our morning excursion seemed to bring back all the bitterness of his spirit. He was silent for a long time—until, indeed, we were ready to leave the hotel; and then, as he accompanied us to the door, he produced a letter, and said, with an affectation of carelessness—

"By the way, I have a message for you. It was lucky I thought of going round to the post-office this morning, or I should have probably missed this. Katty Tatham desires to be remembered to you all, and hopes you will bring her back a piece of Scotch heather to show that you went all the way. Ta-ta!"

He waved his hand to us, and went in. My Lady looked at me solemnly, and said nothing for a moment, until Bell had passed along the road a little bit, with the Lieutenant.

"Is that another story, do you think? Do you believe that Katty Tatham is actually in correspondence with him?"

"He did not say so."

"He meant that we should infer it, at all events; and that, after what he said last night——"

Tita was dreadfully puzzled. She could understand how vexation of spirit might drive a foolish young man into making a statement not wholly in accordance with fact; but that he should repeat this legend in another way, and bring the name of a lady into it——no, Tita could scarcely believe that all this was untrue.

She hurried up to Bell, and placed her hand within the young lady's arm.

"Is it not strange that Katty Tatham should be writing to Arthur, if that was what he meant."

"Oh no, not at all. They are very old friends;

and, besides, she does all the letter-writing for her papa, who is almost blind, poor old man. And what a nice girl she is, isn't she, Tita?"

Of course we were all anxious to persuade each other that Katty Tatham was the very nicest girl in all England, although none of us except Bell had seen her for two or three years; and it was wonderful how this sort of talk brightened up the spirits of our party. The Lieutenant grew quite interested in Katty Tatham. He was nearly praising her himself, although he had never heard her name until that moment. In short, the four of us were ready to swear that this poor little Katty was just as pleasant and honest and pretty and charming a girl as was to be found anywhere in the world, or out of it, and that it was most singular that she had never married. Tita declared that she knew that Katty had had ever so many offers; and that it was not alone the frailties of her father that kept her from marrying.

"She must have been waiting for some one," said the small woman, rather slyly.

What a morning it was! As we walked along the white road, in the stillness of the heat, the blue waters of Grasmere glimmered through the trees. Never had we seen the colours of Bell's Fairyland so intense. The hills in the distance had a silvery haze thrown over their pale purples, but here around us the sharp clear colours blazed in the sunshine—the deep blue of

Grasmere, the yellow-white of the road, and the various rich greens and browns of the trees and the shore. And then, by and by, we came in sight of Rydal Water. How different it was to the weird and gloomy lake we had found two evenings before lying buried between the hills. Now it seemed shallow and fair and light, with a grey shimmer of wind across its surface, breaking here and there the perfect mirror of the mountain-slopes and woods. In the absolute silence around us we could hear the water-hens calling to each other; and out there among the reeds we could see them paddling about, dipping their heads into the lake, and fluttering their wings. We walked on to Rydal bridge, and had a look at the clear brown rivulet rushing down its narrow channel between the thick underwood and the trees. We took the Lieutenant up to Rydal Mount—the small house with its tree-fuschias standing bright and warm in the sunshine—and from the plateau in front beheld the great fair landscape around the silver-white lake of Windermere. We went up to the falls of Rydal Beck, and, in short, went the round of the ordinary tourist—all for the sake of our Prussian friend, we persuaded ourselves. Bell was his guide, and he looked as though he would have liked to be led for ever. Perhaps he took away with him but a confused recollection of all the interesting things she told him; but surely, if the young man has a memory, he cannot

even now have forgotten that bright, clear, warm day that was spent about Rydal, with a certain figure in the foreground that would have lent a strange and gracious charm to a far less beautiful picture.

"Is it not an odd thing," I say to Queen Titania, who has been pulling and plaiting wild-flowers in order to let the young folks get ahead of us, "how you associate certain groups of unheeding trees and streams and hills with various events in your life, and can never get over the impression that they wear such and such a look?"

"I daresay it's quite true, but I don't understand," she says, with the calm impertinence that distinguishes her.

"If you will cease for a moment to destroy your gloves by pulling these weeds, I will tell you a story which will convey my meaning to your small intellect."

"Oh, a story," she says, with a beautiful sigh of resignation.

"There was a young lady once upon a time who was about to leave England and go with her mamma to live in the south-west of France. They did not expect to come back for a good number of years, if ever they came back. And so a young man of their acquaintance got up a farewell banquet at Richmond, and several friends came down to the hotel. They sat in a room overlooking the windings of the river,

and the soft masses of foliage, and the far landscape stretching on to Windsor. The young man had, a little time before, asked the young lady to marry him, and she refused; but he bore her no malice——"

"He has taken care to have his revenge since," says Tita.

"You interrupt the story. They sat down to dinner on this summer evening. Everyone was delighted with the view; but to this wretched youth it seemed as though the landscape were drowned in sadness, and the river a river of unutterable grief. All the trees seemed to be saying good-bye, and when the sun went down, it was as though it would never light up any other day with the light of bygone days. The mist came over the trees. The evening fell, slow, and sad, and grey. Down by the stream a single window was lit up, and that made the melancholy of the picture even more painful, until the young man, who had eaten nothing and drank nothing, and talked to people as though he were in a dream, felt as if all the world had grown desolate, and was no more worth having——"

"If I had only known," says Tita, in a voice so low and gentle that you could scarcely have heard it.

"And then, you know, the carriages came round; and he saw her, with the others, come downstairs prepared to leave. He bade good-night to the mamma, who got into the carriage. He bade good-night to

her; and she was about to get in too, when she suddenly remembered that she had left some flowers in the dining-room, and ran back to fetch them. Before he could overtake her she had got the flowers and was coming back through the passage into the hall. 'It isn't good-night, it is good-bye, we must say'—I think he said something like that—and she held out her hand—and somehow there was a very strange look in her eyes, just as if she were going to cry———. But, you know, there's no use in your crying just now about it."

Tita is pretending to smile, but a certain tremor of the lips is visible; and so the narrator hurries on:—

"Now look here. For the next three months—for the soft-hearted creature had hurriedly whispered that she might return to England then—that young man haunted Richmond. He pretty nearly ruined his prospects in life, and his digestion as well, by continual and solitary dining at the Star and Garter. He could have kissed the stone steps of that hotel, and never entered its vestibule without blessing the white pillars and blank walls. He spent hours in writing letters there———"

"So that the Biarritz boatmen wondered why so many envelopes should have the Richmond postmark," says Tita—though how she could have learnt anything about it goodness only knows.

——"and haled out every complaisant friend he could lay hands on to moon about the neighbourhood. But the strange thing is this—that while he was in love with the vestibule of the hotel, he never saw the twilight fall over the Richmond woods without feeling a cold hand laid on his heart; and when he thinks of the place now—with the mists coming over the trees and the river getting dark—he thinks that the view from Richmond-hill is the most melancholy in all the world."

"And what does he think of Eastbourne?"

"That is a very different thing. He and she got into the quarrelling stage there——"

"In which they have successfully remained to the present time."

"But when she was young and innocent, she would always admit that she had begun the quarrel."

"On the contrary, she told stories in order to please him."

"That motive does not much control her actions now-a-days, at all events."

Here Tita would probably have delivered a crushing reply, but that Bell came up and said—

"What! you two children fighting again! What is it all about? Let me be umpire."

"He says that there is more red in the Scotch daisies than in the English daisies," says Tita, calmly. It

was well done. Yet you should hear her lecture her two boys on the enormity of telling a fib.

How sad Bell was to leave the beautiful valley in which we had spent this happy time! Arthur had got his dog-cart; and when the phaeton was brought round, the Major's cob was also put-to, and both vehicles stood at the door. We took a last look at Grasmere. "Dich, mein stilles Thal!" said Bell, with a smile; and the Lieutenant looked quite shamefaced with pleasure to hear her quote his favourite song. Arthur did not so well like the introduction of those few words. He said, with a certain air of indifference—

"Can I give anybody a seat in the dog-cart? It would be a change."

"Oh, thank you: I should like so much to go with you, Arthur," says Tita.

Did you ever see the like of it! The woman has no more notion of considering her own comfort than if she had the hide of an alligator, instead of being, as she is, about the most sensitive creature in the world. However, it is well for her—if she will permit me to say so—that she has people around her who are not quite so impulsively generous; and on this occasion it was obviously necessary to save her from being tortured by the fractious complainings of this young man, whom she would have sympathized with and consoled if the effort had cost her her life.

"No," I say. "That won't do. We have got some stiff hills to climb presently, and some one must remain in the phaeton while the others walk. Now, who looks best in the front of the phaeton?"

"Mamma, of course," says Bell, as if she had discovered a conundrum; and so the matter was settled in a twinkling.

I think it would have been more courteous for Arthur to have given the phaeton precedence, considering who was driving it; but he was so anxious to show off the paces of Major Quinet's cob, that on starting he gave the animal a touch of the whip that made the light and high vehicle spring forward in a surprising manner.

"Young man, reflect that you are driving the father of a family," I say to him.

Nevertheless, he went through the village of Grasmere at a considerable rate of speed; and when we got well up into the road which goes by the side of the Rothay into the region of the hills, we found that we had left Tita and her company far behind. Then he began to walk the cob.

"Look here!" he said, quite fiercely; "is Bell going to marry that German fellow?"

"How do I know?" I answer, astonished by the young man's impudence.

"You ought to know. You are her guardian. You are responsible for her——"

"To you?"

"No, not to me; but to your own conscience; and I think the way in which you have entrapped her into making the acquaintance of this man, of whom she knows nothing, doesn't look very well. I may as well say it when I think it. You ought to have known that a girl at her age is ready to be pleased with any novelty; and to draw her away from her old friends—I suppose you can explain it all to your own satisfaction—but I confess that to me——"

I let the young man rave. He went on in this fashion for some little time, getting momentarily more reckless and vehement and absurd in his statements. If Tita had only known what she had escaped!

"But after all," I say to him, when the waters of this deluge of rhetoric had abated, "what does it matter to you? We have allowed Bell to do just as she pleased; and perhaps, for all we know, she may regard Count von Rosen with favour, although she has never intimated such a thing. But what does it matter to you? You say you are going to get married."

"So I shall!" he said, with an unnecessary amount of emphasis.

"Katty Tatham is a very nice girl."

"I should think so! There's no coquetry about her, or that sort of vanity that is anxious to receive

flattery from every sort of stranger that is seen in the street——"

"You don't mean to say that that is the impression you have formed of Bell?"

And here all his violence and determination broke down. In a tone of absolute despair he confessed that he was beside himself, and did not know what to do. What should he do? Ought he to implore Bell to promise to marry him? Or should he leave her to her own ways, and go and seek a solution of his difficulties in marrying this pretty little girl down in Sussex, who would make him a good wife and teach him to forget all the sufferings he had gone through? The wretched young fellow was really in a bad way; and there were actually tears in his eyes when he said that several times of late he had wished he had the courage to drown himself.

To tell a young man in this state that there is no woman in the world worth making such a fuss about, is useless. He rejects with scorn the cruel counsels offered by middle age; and sees in them only taunts and insults. Moreover, he accuses middle age of not believing in its own maxims of worldly prudence; and sometimes that is the case.

"At all events," I say to him, "you are unjust to Bell in going on in this wild way. She is not a coquette, nor vain, nor heartless; and if you have anything to complain of, or anything to ask from her,

why not go direct to herself, instead of indulging in frantic suspicions and accusations?"

"But—but I cannot," he said. "It drives me mad to see her talking to that man. If I were to begin to speak to her of all this, I am afraid matters would be made worse."

"Well, take your own course. Neither my wife nor myself have anything to do with it. Arrange it among yourselves; only, for goodness' sake, leave the women a little peace."

"Do you think *I* mean to trouble them?" he says, firing up. "You will see."

What deep significance lay in these words was not inquired into, for we had now to descend from the dog-cart. Far behind us we saw that Bell and Count von Rosen were already walking by the side of the phaeton, and Tita talking to them from her lofty seat. We waited for them until they came up, and then we proceeded to climb the steep road that leads up and along the slopes of the mighty Helvellyn.

"Mademoiselle," said the Lieutenant, "who is it will say that there is much rain in your native country? Or did you alarm us so as to make this surprise all the better, yes?"

Indeed, there was scarcely a flake of white in all the blue overhead; and, on the other side of the great valley, the masses of the Wythburn and Borrodaile

Fells showed their various hues and tints so that you could almost have fancied them transparent clouds. Then the road descended, and we got down to the solitary shores of Thirlmere, the most Scotch-looking, perhaps, of the English lakes. Here the slopes of the hills are more abrupt, houses are few and far between, there is an aspect of remoteness and a perfect silence reigning over the still water, and the peaks of mountains that you see beyond are more jagged and blue than the rounded hills about Windermere. From the shores of Thirlmere the road again rises, until, when you come to the crest of the height, you find the leaden-coloured lake lying sheer below you, and only a little stone wall guarding the edge of the precipitous slope. We rested the horses here. Bell began to pull them handfuls of Dutch clover and grass. The Lieutenant talked to my Lady about the wonders of mountainous countries as they appeared to people who had been bred in the plains. Arthur looked over the stone wall down into the great valley; and was he thinking, I wonder, whether the safest refuge from all his troubles might not be that low-lying and silent gulf of water that seemed to be miles beneath him?

When we were about to start again, the Lieutenant says to Arthur—

"If you are tired of driving the dog-cart, you might come into the phaeton, and I will drive your horse on to Keswick."

Who prompted him to make such an offer? Not himself, surely. I had formed a tolerable opinion of his good-nature; but the impatient and fretful manner in which he had of late been talking about Arthur rendered it highly improbable that this suggestion was his own. What did Bell's downcast look mean?

"Thank you, I prefer the dog-cart," said Arthur coldly.

"Oh, Arthur," says Bell, "you've no idea how steep the hill is, going down to Keswick, and in a dog-cart too——"

"I suppose," says the young man, "that I can drive a dog-cart down a hill as well as anybody else."

"At all events," says the Lieutenant, with something of a frown, "you need not address Mademoiselle as if that she did you harm in trying to prevent your breaking your neck."

This was getting serious; so that there was nothing for it but to bundle the boy into his dog-cart and order the Lieutenant to change places with my Lady. As for the writer of these pages—the emotions he experienced while a mad young fellow was driving him in a light and high dog-cart down the unconscionable hill that lies above Keswick, he will not attempt to describe. There are occurrences in life which it is better to forget; but if ever he was tempted to evoke maledictions on the hotheadedness, and bad

temper, and general insanity of boys in love—— Enough! We got down to Keswick in safety.

Now we had got among the tourists, and no mistake. The hotel was all alive with elderly ladies, who betrayed an astonishing acquaintance with the names of the mountains, and apportioned them off for successive days as if they were dishes for luncheon and dinner. The landlord undertook to get us beds somewhere, if only we would come into his coffee-room, which was also a drawing-room, and had a piano in it. He was a portly and communicative person, with a certain magnificence of manner which was impressive. He betrayed quite a paternal interest in Tita, and calmly and loftily soothed her anxious fears. Indeed, his assurances pleased us much, and we began rather to like him; although the Lieutenant privately remarked that Clicquot is a French word, and ought not, under any circumstances whatever, to be pronounced "Clickot."

Then we went down to Derwentwater. It was a warm and clear twilight. Between the dark green lines of the hedges we met maidens in white with scarlet opera-cloaks, coming home through the narrow lane. Then we got into the open, and found the shores of the silver lake, and got into a boat and sailed out upon the still waters, so that we could face the wonders of a brilliant sunset.

But all that glow of red and yellow in the north-

west was as nothing to the strange gradations of colour that appeared along the splendid range of mountain-peaks beyond the lake. From the remote north round to the south-east they stretched like a mighty wall; and whereas near the gold and crimson of the sunset they were of a warm, roseate, and half-transparent purple, as they came along into the darker regions of the twilight they grew more and more cold in hue and harsh in outline. Up there in the north they had caught the magic colours so that they themselves seemed but light clouds of beautiful vapour; but as the eye followed the line of twisted and mighty shapes, the rose-colour deepened into purple, the purple grew darker and more dark, and greens and blues began to appear over the wooded islands and shores of Derwentwater. Finally, away down there in the south there was a lowering sky, into which rose wild masses of slate-coloured mountains, and in the threatening and yet clear darkness that reigned among these solitudes we could see but one small tuft of white cloud that clung coldly to the gloomy summit of Glaramara.

That strange darkness in the south boded rain; and, as if in anticipation of the wet, the fires of the sunset went down, and a grey twilight fell over the land. As we walked home between the tall hedges there was a chill dampness in the air; and we seemed to know that we had at last bade good-bye to the

beautiful weather that had lit up for us the blue water and green shores of Grasmere.

[*Note by Queen Titania.*—"I begin to think the old lady in Nottinghamshire had some excuse for what she said, although she need not have expressed herself so *rudely*. Of course it is impossible to put down all that we spoke about on those happy days of our journey; but when all the ordinary talk is *carefully excluded*, and everything *spiteful* retained, I cannot wonder that a stranger should think that my husband and myself do not lead a *very pleasant life*. It looks very *serious* when it is put in type; whereas we have been driven into all this nonsense of quarrelling merely to temper the excessive sentimentality of those young folks, which is quite *amusing* in its way. Indeed, I am afraid that Bell, although she has never said a word to that effect to me, is, *far more deeply pledged* than one who thinks he has a great insight into such affairs has any notion of. I am sure it was none of my doing. If Bell had told me she was engaged to Arthur, nothing could have given me greater pleasure. In the meantime, I hope no one will read too literally the foregoing pages, and think that in our house we are continually treading on lucifer matches and frightening everybody by small explosions. I suppose it is *literary art* that compels such a perversion of the truth! And as for Chapter Twenty-six—which has a great deal of nonsense in it about Richmond—I should think that a very good motto for it would be two lines I once saw quoted somewhere. I don't know who is the author; but they said—

"'*The legend is as true, I undertake.*
As Tristram is, or Lancelot of the Lake.'"]

CHAPTER XII.

ALONG THE GRETA.

"You stood before me like a thought,
A dream remembered in a dream.
But when those meek eyes first did seem
To tell me, Love within you wrought—
O Greta, dear domestic stream!
Has not, since then, Love's prompture deep,
Has not Love's whisper evermore,
Been ceaseless as thy gentle roar?
Sole voice, when other voices sleep,
Dear under-song in Clamor's hour."

"Now, Bell," says Tita, "I am going to ask you a serious question."

"Yes, Mamma," says the girl, dutifully.

"Where is the North Country?"

Good gracious! This was a pretty topic to start as we sat idly by the shores of Derwentwater, and watched the great white clouds move lazily over the mountain peaks beyond. For, did it not involve some haphazard remark of Bell's, which would instantly plunge the Lieutenant into the history of Strathclyde, so as to prove, in defiance of the first principles of logic and the Ten Commandments, that the girl was altogether right? Bell solved the difficulty in a novel fashion. She merely repeated, in a low and careless voice, some lines from the chief favourite of all her songs—

"While sadly I roam, I regret my dear home,
Where lads and young lasses are making the hay,

The merry bells ring, and the birds sweetly sing,
And maidens and meadows are pleasant and gay:
Oh! the oak and the ash, and the bonny ivy-tree,
They grow so green in the North Countree!"

"But where is it?" says Tita. "You are always looking to the North and never getting there. Down in Oxford, you were all anxiety to get up to Wales. Once in Wales, you hurried us on to Westmoreland. Now you are in Westmoreland, you are still hankering after the North, and I want to know where you mean to stop. At Carlisle? Or Edinburgh? Or John o' Groat's?"

The little woman was becoming quite eloquent in her quiet and playful fashion, as she sat there with Bell's hand in hers. The girl looked rather embarrassed; and so, of course, the Lieutenant, always on the look-out for such a chance, must needs whip up his heavy artillery and open fire on Bell's opponent.

"No, Madame," he says; "why should you fix down that beautiful country to any place? Is it not better to have the dream always before you? You are too practical——"

Too practical!—This from an impertinent young Uhlan to a gentle lady whose eyes are full of wistful visions and fancies from the morning to the night!

"——It is better that you have it like the El Dorado that the old travellers went to seek—always in front of them, but never just in sight. Mademoiselle is

quite right not to put down her beautiful country in the map."

"Count von Rosen," says my Lady, with some show of petulance, "you are always proving Bell to be in the right. You never help me; and you know I never get any assistance from the quarter whence it ought to come. Now, if I were to say that I belonged to the North Country, you would never think of bringing all sorts of historical arguments to prove that I did."

"Madame," says the young man, with great modesty, "the reason is that you never need any such arguments, for you are always in the right at the first."

Here Bell laughs in a very malicious manner; for was not the retort provoked? My Lady asks the girl to watch the creeping of a shadow over the summit of Glaramara, as if that had anything to do with the history of Deira.

Well, the women owed us some explanation; for between them they had resolved upon our setting out for Penrith that afternoon. All the excursions we had planned in this beautiful neighbourhood had to be abandoned, and for no ostensible reason whatever. That there must be some occult reason, however, for this odd resolve was quite certain; and the Lieutenant and myself were left to fit such keys to the mystery as we might think proper.

Was it really, then, this odd longing of Bell's to go northward, or was it not rather a secret consciousness

that Arthur would cease to accompany us at Carlisle? The young man had remained behind at the hotel that morning. He had important letters to write, he said. A telegram had arrived for him while we were at breakfast; and he had remarked, in a careless way, that it was from Mr. Tatham, Katty's father. Perhaps it was. There is no saying what a reckless young fellow may not goad an elderly gentleman into doing; but if this message, as we were given to understand, had really something to do with Arthur's relations towards Katty, it was certainly an odd matter to arrange by telegraph.

As for the Lieutenant, he appeared to treat the whole affair with a cool indifference which was probably assumed. In private conversation he informed me that what Arthur might do in the way of marrying Miss Tatham or anybody else was of no consequence whatever to him.

"Mademoiselle will tell me my fate—that is enough," he said. "You think that I am careless,—yes? It is not so, except I am convinced your friend from Twickenham has nothing to do with it. No, he will not marry Mademoiselle—that is so clear that anyone may see it—but he may induce her, frighten her, complain of her, so that she will not marry me. Good. If it is so, I will know who has served me that way."

"You needn't look as if you meant to eat up the whole family," I say to him.

"And more," he continued, with even greater fierceness, "it has come to be too much, this. He shall not go beyond Carlisle with us. I will not allow Mademoiselle to be persecuted. You will say I have no right—that it is no business of mine——"

"That is precisely what I do say. Leave the girl to manage her own affairs. If she wishes Arthur to go, she can do it with a word. Do you think there is no method of giving a young man his *congé* than by breaking his neck?"

"Oh, you think, then, that Mademoiselle wishes him to remain near her?"

A sudden and cold reserve had fallen over the young fellow's manner. He stood there for a moment as if he calmly expected to hear the worst, and was ready to pack up his traps and betake himself to the south.

"I tell you again," I say, "that I think nothing about it, and know nothing about it. But as for the decree of Providence which ordained that young people in love should become the pest and torture of their friends, of all the inscrutable, unjust, perplexing, and monstrous facts of life, this is about the worst. I will take a cigar from you, if you please."

"That is all you care for—yes—a cigar," says the young man, peevishly. "If the phaeton were to be smashed to pieces this afternoon—a cigar. If Mademoiselle were to go and marry this wretched fellow—again, a cigar. I do not think that you care more

for anything around you than the seal which comes up and shakes hands with his keeper in the Zoological Gardens."

"Got a light?"

"And yet I think it is possible you will get a surprise very soon. Yes! and will not be so indifferent. After Carlisle——"

"After Carlisle you come to Gretna Green. But if you propose to run away with Bell, don't take my horses—they are not used to hard work."

"Run away! You do talk as if Mademoiselle were willing to run away with anybody. No, it is quite another thing."

And here the Lieutenant, getting into the morose state—which always follows the fierceness of a lover—begins to pull about the shawls and pack them up.

Nevertheless, the eighteen miles between Keswick and Penrith proved one of the pleasantest portions of our journey. There was not much driving, it is true. We started at mid-day, and, having something like five or six hours in which to get over this stretch of mountain and moorland road, we spent most of the time in walking, even Tita descending from her usual post to wander along the hedgerows and look down into the valley of the Greta. As the white road rose gradually from the plains of the lakes, taking us along the slopes of the mighty Saddleback, the view of the beautiful country behind us grew more

extended and lovely. The clear silver day showed us the vast array of mountains in the palest of hues; and as white clouds floated over the hills and the gleaming surface of Derwentwater, even the shadows seemed pale and luminous. There was no mist, but a bewildering glare of light, that seemed at once to transpose and blend the clouds, the sky, the hills, and the lake. There was plenty of motion in the picture, too, for there was a south wind blowing light shadows of grey across the silver whiteness; but there was no louring mass of vapour lying up at the horizon, and all our evil anticipations of the previous day remained unfulfilled.

What a picturesque glen is that over which the great mass of Saddleback towers! We could hear the Greta rushing down the chasm through a world of light-green foliage; and sometimes we got a glimpse of the stream itself—a rich brown, with dashes of white foam. Then you cross the river where it is joined by St. John's Beck; and as you slowly climb the sides of Saddleback, the Greta becomes the Glenderamackin, and by and by you lose it altogether as it strikes off to the north. But there are plenty of streams about. Each gorge and valley has its beck; and you can hear the splashing of the water where there is nothing visible but masses of young trees lying warm and green in the sunshine.

And as for the wild-flowers that grow here in a

wonderful luxuriance of form and colour, who can describe them? The Lieutenant was growing quite learned in English wild blossoms. He could tell the difference between Herb Robert and Ragged Robin, was not to be deceived into believing the rock-rose a buttercup, and had become profound in the study of the various speedwells. But he was a late scholar. Arthur had been under Bell's tuition years before. He knew all the flowers she liked best; he could pick them out at a distance without going through the trouble of laboriously comparing them, as our poor Lieutenant had to do. You should have seen these two young men—with black rage in their hearts—engaged in the idyllic pastime of culling pretty blossoms for a fair maiden. Bell treated them both with a simple indifference that was begotten chiefly by the very definite interest she had in their pursuit. She was really thinking a good deal more of her tangled and picturesque bouquet than of the intentions of the young men in bringing the flowers to her. She was speedily to be recalled from her dream.

At a certain portion of the way we came upon a lot of forget-me-nots, that were growing amid the roadside grass, meaning no harm. The pale turquoise blue of the flowers was looking up to the silver-white fleece of the sky, just as if there was some communion between the two that rude human hands had no right to break. Arthur made a plunge at them. He pulled up

at once some half-dozen stalks and came back with them to Bell.

"Here," he said, with a strange sort of smile, "are some forget-me-nots for you. They are supposed to be typical of woman's constancy, are they not?—for they keep fresh about half-a-dozen hours."

Bell received the flowers without a trace of surprise or vexation in her manner; and then, with the most admirable self-possession, she turned to the Lieutenant, separated one of the flowers from the lot, and said, with a great gentleness and calmness—

"Count von Rosen, do you care to have one of these. You have very pretty songs about the forget-me-not, in Germany."

I believe that young fellow did not know whether he was dead or alive at the moment when the girl addressed him thus. For a single second a flash of surprise and bewilderment appeared in his face, and then he took the flower from her and said, looking down as if he did not wish any of us to see his face—

"Mademoiselle, thank you."

But almost directly afterwards he had recovered himself. With an air as if nothing had happened, he pulled out his pocket-book, most carefully and tenderly put the flower in it, and closed it again. Arthur, with his face as hot as fire, had begun to talk to Tita about Threlkeld Hall.

It was a pretty little scene to be enacted on this

bright morning, on a grassy wayside in Cumberland, with all the lakes and mountains of Westmoreland for a blue and silvery background. But after all, of what importance was it? A girl may hand her companion of the moment a flower without any deadly intent? How was anyone to tell, indeed, that she had so turned to the Lieutenant as a retort to Arthur's not very courteous remark? There was no appearance of vexation in her manner. On the contrary, she turned and gave von Rosen this paltry little forget-me-not, and made a remark about German songs, just as she might have done at home in Surrey to any of the young fellows who come dawdling about the house, wondering why such a pretty girl should not betray a preference for somebody. Even as a punishment for Arthur's piece of impudence, it might not have any but the most transitory significance. Bell is quick to feel any remark of the kind; and it is just possible that at the moment she may have been stung into executing this pretty and pastoral deed of vengeance.

But the Lieutenant, at all events, was persuaded that something of mighty import had just occurred on the picturesque banks of this Cumberland stream. He hung about Bell for some time, but seemed afraid to address her, and had ceased to offer her flowers. He was permitted to bring her a sunshade, however, and that pleased him greatly. And thereafter he went up to the horses, and walked by their heads, and ad-

dressed them in very kindly and soothing language, just as if they had done him some great service.

Arthur came back to us.

"It looks rather ridiculous," he said, abruptly, "to see the procession of this horse and dog-cart following your phaeton. Hadn't I better drive on to Penrith?"

"The look of it does not matter here, surely," says Bell. "We have only met two persons since we started, and we shan't find many people up in this moorland we are coming to."

"Oh, as you please," said the young man, a trifle mollified. "If you don't mind, of course I don't."

Presently he said, with something of an effort—

"How long is your journey to last altogether?"

"I don't know," I say to him. "We shall be in Edinburgh in two or three days, and our project of driving thither accomplished. But we may spend a week or two in Scotland after that."

"Count von Rosen is very anxious to see something of Scotland," says Bell, with the air of a person conveying information.

I knew why Count von Rosen was so anxious to see something of Scotland—he would have welcomed a journey to the North Pole if only he was sure that Bell was going there too. But Arthur said, somewhat sharply—

"I am glad I shall escape the duty of dancing attendance on a stranger. I suppose you mean to take him

to the Tower and to Madame Tussaud's when you return to London?"

"But won't you come on with us to Edinburgh, Arthur?" says Bell, quite amiably.

"No, thank you," he says; and then, turning to me, "How much does it cost to send a horse and trap from Carlisle to London?"

"From Edinburgh it costs 10*l.* 5*s.*, so you may calculate."

"I suppose I can get a late train to-morrow night for myself?"

"There is one after midnight."

He spoke in a gloomy way, that had nevertheless some affectation of carelessness in it. Bell again expressed her regret that he could not accompany us to Edinburgh; but he did not answer.

We were now about to get into our respective vehicles, for before us lay a long stretch of high moorland road, and we had been merely idling the time away during the last mile or two.

"Won't you get into the dog-cart for a bit, Bell?" says Arthur.

"Oh yes, if you like," says Bell, good-naturedly.

The Lieutenant, knowing nothing of this proposal, was rather astonished when, after having called to him to stop the horses, we came up and Bell was assisted into the dog-cart, Arthur following and taking the reins.

The rest of us got into the phaeton; but, of course, Arthur had got the start of us, and went on in front.

"How far on is Gretna Green?" asks my Lady in a low voice.

The Lieutenant scowled, and regarded the two figures in front of us in anything but an amiable mood.

"You do not care much for her safety to entrust her to that stupid boy," he remarks.

"Do you think he will really run away with her?" says Tita.

"Run away!" repeats the Lieutenant, with some scorn; "if he were to try that, or any other foolish thing, do you know what you would see? You would see Mademoiselle take the reins from him, and go where she pleased in spite of him. Do you think that she is controlled by that pitiful fellow?"

Whatever control Bell possessed, there was no doubt at all that Arthur was taking her away from us at a considerable pace. After that stretch of moorland the road got very hilly; and no man who is driving his own horses likes to run them up steep ascents for the mere pleasure of catching a runaway boy and his sweetheart. In the ups and downs of this route we sometimes lost sight of Bell and Arthur altogether. The Lieutenant was so wroth that he dared not speak. Tita grew a trifle anxious, and at last she said—

"Won't you drive on and overtake these young

people? I am sure Arthur is forgetting how hilly the road is."

"I don't. Arthur is driving somebody else's horse, but I can't afford to ill-treat my own in order to stop him."

"I am sure your horses have not been overworked," says the Lieutenant; and at this moment, as we get to the crest of a hill, we find that the two fugitives are on the top of the next incline.

"*Hillo! Hie! Heh!*"

Two faces turn round. A series of pantomimic gestures now conveys my Lady's wishes, and we see Arthur jump down to the ground, assist Bell to alight, and then she begins to pull some grass for the horse.

When we, also, get to the top of this hill, lo! the wonderful sight that spreads out before us! Along the northern horizon stands a pale line of mountains, and as we look down into the great plain that lies between, the yellow light of the sunset touches a strange sort of mist, so that you would think there lay a broad estuary or a great arm of the sea. We ourselves are in shadow, but all the wide landscape before us is bathed in golden fire and smoke; and up there, ranged along the sky, are the pale hills that stand like phantoms rising out of another world.

Bell comes into the phaeton. We set out again along the hilly road, getting comforted presently by the landlord of a wayside inn, who says, "Ay, the road

goes pretty mooch doon bank a' t' waay to Penrith, after ye get a mile forrit." Bell cannot tell us whether this is pure Cumbrian, or Cumbrian mixed with Scotch, but the Lieutenant insists that it does not much matter, for "forrit" is very good Frisian. The chances are that we should have suffered another sermon on the German origin of our language, but that signs of a town became visible. We drove in from the country highways in the gathering twilight. There were lights in the streets of Penrith, but the place itself seemed to have shut up and gone to bed. It was but half-past eight; yet nearly every shop was shut, and the inn into which we drove had clearly got over its day's labour. If we had asked for dinner at this hour, the simple folks would probably have laughed at us; so we called it supper, and a very excellent supper it was.

CHAPTER XIII.

"ADE!"

"Edwin, if right I read my song,
With slighted passion paced along,
All in the moony light;
'Twas near an old enchanted court,
Where sportive fairies made resort
To revel out the night."

"I AM so sorry you can't come further with us than Carlisle," says Queen Titania to Arthur, with a great kindliness for the lad shining in her brown eyes.

"Duty calls me back—and pleasure, too," he says,

with rather a melancholy smile. "You will receive a message from me, I expect, shortly after I return. Where will letters find you in Scotland?"

This was rather a difficult question to answer; but it took us away from the dangerous subject of Arthur's intentions, about which the less said at that moment the better. The Lieutenant professed a great desire to spend two or three weeks in Scotland; and Bell began to sketch out phantom tours, whisking about from Loch Lubnaig to Loch Long, cutting round the Mull of Cantire, and coming back from Oban to the Crinan in a surprising manner.

"And, Mademoiselle," says he, "perhaps to-morrow, when you get into Scotland, you will begin to tell me something of the Scotch songs, if it does not trouble you. I have read some—yes—of Burns's songs, mostly through Freiligrath's translations, but I have not heard any sung, and I know that you know them 'all. Oh yes, I liked them very much—they are good, hearty songs, not at all melancholy; and an excellent fellow of that country I met in the war—he was a correspondent for some newspaper, and he was at Metz, but he was as much of a soldier as any man of us—he told me there is not any such music as the music of the Scotch songs. That is a very bold thing to say, you know, Mademoiselle; but if you will sing some of them, I will give you my frank opinion."

"Very well," says Mademoiselle, with a gracious

smile, "but I think I ought to begin to-day, for there is a great deal of ground to be got over."

"So much the better," says he.

"But if you young people," says Queen Tita, "who are all bent on your own pleasure, would let me make a suggestion, I think I can put your musical abilities to a better use. I am going to give a concert as soon as I get home, for the benefit of our Clothing Club; and I want you to undertake, Count von Rosen, to sing for us two or three German songs—Körner's war-songs, for example."

"Oh, with great pleasure, Madame, if you will not all laugh at my singing."

Unhappy wretch—another victim! But it was a mercy she asked him only for a few songs, instead of hinting something about a contribution. That was probably to come.

"Bell," says my Lady, "do you think we ought to charge twopence this time?"

On this tremendous financial question Bell declined to express an opinion, beyond suggesting that the people, if they could only be induced to come, would value the concert all the more. A much more practical proposal, however, is placed before this committee now assembled in Penrith. At each of these charity-concerts in our schoolroom, a chamber is set apart for the display of various viands and an uncommon quantity of champagne, devoted to the use of the per-

formers, their friends, and a few special guests. It is suggested that the expense of this entertainment should not always fall upon one person; there being several householders in the neighbourhood who were much more able to afford such promiscuous banquets.

"I am sure," says my Lady, with some emphasis, "that I know several gentlemen who would only be too eager to come forward and send those refreshments, if they only knew you were making such a fuss about it."

"My dear," I say, humbly, "I wish you would speak to them on this subject."

"I wouldn't demean myself so far," says Tita, "as to ask for wine and biscuits from my neighbours."

"I wish these neighbours wouldn't drink so much of my champagne."

"But it is a charity; why should you grumble?" says the Lieutenant.

"Why? These abandoned ruffians and their wives give five shillings to the charity, and come and eat and drink ten shillings worth of my food and wine. That is why."

"Never mind," says Bell, with her gentle voice; "when Count von Rosen comes to sing we shall have a great audience, and there will be a lot of money

taken at the door, and we shall be able to clear all expenses and pay you, too, for the champagne."

"At sevenpence-halfpenny a bottle, I suppose?"

"I did not think you got it so cheap," says Tita, with a pleasing look of innocence; and therewith the young folks began to laugh, as they generally do when she says anything specially impertinent.

Just before starting for Carlisle, we happened to be in the old churchyard of Penrith, looking at the pillars which are supposed to mark the grave of a giant of old, and trying to persuade ourselves that we saw something like Runic carvings on the stones. There came forward to us a strange-looking person, who said suddenly—

"God bless you!"

There was no harm in that, at all events, but presently he began to attach himself to Arthur, and insisted on talking to him; while, whenever the young man seemed inclined to resent this intrusion, the mysterious stranger put in another "God bless you!" so as to disarm criticism. We speedily discovered that this person was a sort of whiskified Old Mortality, who claimed to have cut all manner of tombstones standing around; and to Arthur, whom he specially affected, he continually appealed with "Will that do, eh? I did that—will that do, eh?" The young man was not in a communicative mood, to begin with; but the persecution he now suffered was like to have

driven him wild. In vain he moved away: the other followed him. In vain he pretended not to listen: the other did not care. He would probably have expressed his feelings warmly, but for the pious ejaculation which continually came in; and when a man says "God bless you," you can't with decency wish him the reverse. At length, out of pure compassion, the Lieutenant went over to the man, and said—

"Well, you are a very wicked old gentleman, to have been drinking at this time in the morning."

"God bless you!"

"Thank you. You have given to us your blessing all round: now will you kindly go away?"

"Wouldn't you like to see a bit of my cutting, now, eh?"

"No, I wouldn't; I would like to see you go home and get a sleep, and get up sober."

"God bless you!"

"The same to you. Good-bye"—and behold! Arthur was delivered, and returned, blushing like a girl, to the women, who had been rather afraid of this half-tipsy or half-silly person, and remained at a distance.

You may be sure that when we were about to start from Penrith, the Lieutenant did not forget to leave out Bell's guitar-case. And so soon as we were well away from the town, and bowling along the level road that leads up to Carlisle, the girl put the blue

ribbon round her shoulder and began to cast about for a song. Arthur was driving close behind us—occasionally sending on the cob so as to exchange a remark or two with my Lady. The wheels made no great noise, however; and in the silence lying over the shining landscape around us, we heard the clear, full, sweet tones of Bell's voice as well as if she had been singing in a room,

"Behind yon hills where Lugar flows—"

That was the first song that she sung; and it was well the Lieutenant was not a Scotchman, and had never heard the air as it is daily played on the Clyde steamers by wandering fiddlers.

"I don't mean to sing all the songs," says Bell, presently; "I shall only give you a verse or so of each of those I know, so that you may judge of them. Now this is a fighting song;" and with that she sung with fine courage—

"Here's Kenmure's health in wine, Willie!
Here's Kenmure's health in wine!
There ne'er was a coward o' Kenmure's blood,
Nor yet o' Gordon's line!
Oh, Kenmure's lads are men, Willie!
Oh, Kenmure's lads are men!
Their hearts and swords are metal true,
And that their foes shall ken!"

How was it that she always sang these wild, rebellious, Jacobite songs with so great an accession of spirit? Never in our southern home had she seemed to care anything about them. There, the only Scotch

songs she used to sing for us were the plaintive laments of unhappy lovers, and such-like things; whereas now she was all for blood and slaughter, for the gathering of the clans, and the general destruction of law and order. I don't believe she knew who Kenmure was. As for the Braes o' Mar, and Callander and Airlie, she had never seen one of these places. And what was this "kane" of which she sang so proudly?—

"Hark the horn!
Up i' the morn;
Bonnie lad, come to the march to-morrow!
Down the Glen,
Grant and his men,
They shall pay kane to the King the morn!
Down by Knockhaspie,
Down by Gillespie,
Many a red runt nods the horn;
Waken not Callum,
Rouky, nor Allan—
They shall pay kane to the King the morn!"

"Why, what a warlike creature you have become, Bell!" says Queen Titania. "Ever since you sang those songs of Maria, with Count von Rosen as the old sergeant, you seem to have forgotten all the pleasant old ballads of melancholy and regret, and taken to nothing but fire and sword. Now, if you were to sing about Logan Braes, or Lucy's Flitting, or Annie's Tryst——"

"I am coming to them," says Bell, meekly.

"No, Mademoiselle," interposes the Lieutenant,

"please do not sing any more just now. You will sing again, in the afternoon, yes? But at present you will harm your voice to sing too much."

Now she had only sung snatches of three songs. What business had he to interfere, and become her guardian? Yet you should have seen how quietly and naturally she laid aside the guitar as soon as he had spoken, and how she handed it to him to put in the case: my Lady looked hard at her gloves, which she always does when she is inwardly laughing and determined that no smile shall appear on her face.

It was rather hard upon Arthur that he should be banished into that solitary trap; but he rejoined us when we stopped at High Hesket to bait the horses, and have a snack of something for lunch. What a picture of desolation is the White Ox of this village! Once upon a time this broad road formed part of the great highway leading towards the north; and here the coaches stopped for the last time before driving into Carlisle. It is a large hostelry; but it had such an appearance of loneliness and desertion about it, that we stopped at the front door (which was shut) to ask whether they could put the horses up. An old lady, dressed in black, and with a worn and sad face, appeared. We could put the horses up, yes. As for luncheon, we could have ham and eggs. The butcher only came to the place twice a week; and as no

traveller stopped here now, no butcher's meat was kept on the premises. We went into the great stables; and found an ostler who looked at us with a wonderful astonishment shining in his light-blue eyes. Looking at the empty stalls, he said he could remember when forty horses were put up there every day. It was the railway that had done it.

We had our ham and eggs in a large and melancholy parlour, filled with old-fashioned pictures and ornaments. The elderly servant-woman who waited on us told us that a gentleman had stopped at the inn on the Monday night before; but it turned out that he was walking to Carlisle, and that he had got afraid of two navvies on the road, and that he therefore had taken a bed there. Before him, no one had stopped at the inn since Whitsuntide. It was all because of them railways.

We hastened away from this doleful and deserted inn, so soon as the horses were rested. They had easy work of it for the remainder of the day's journey. The old coach-road is here remarkably broad, level, and well-made, and we bowled along the solitary highway as many a vehicle had done in bygone years. As we drove into "merry Carlisle," the lamps were lit in the twilight, and numbers of people in the streets. For the convenience of Arthur, we put up at an hotel abutting on the railway station, and then went off to stable the horses elsewhere.

It was rather a melancholy dinner we had in a corner of the great room. The gloom that overspread Arthur's face was too obvious. In vain the Lieutenant talked profoundly to us of the apple legend of Tell in its various appearances (he had just been cribbing his knowledge from Professor Buchheim's excellent essay), and said he would go with my Lady next morning to see the market-place where William of Cloudeslee, who afterwards shot the apple from off his son's head, was rescued from justice by two of his fellow outlaws. Tita was far more concerned to see Arthur of somewhat better spirits on this the last night of his being with us. On our sitting down to dinner, she had said to him, with a pretty smile—

"King Arthur lives in merry Carlisle,
And seemly is to see;
And there with him Queen Guenever,
That bride so bright of blee."

But was it not an unfortunate quotation, however kindly meant? Queen Guenever sat there—as frank, and gracious, and beautiful as a queen or a bride might be—but not with him. That affair of the little blue flower on the banks of the Greta was still rankling in his mind.

He bore himself bravely, however. He would not have the women remain up to see him away by the 12.45 train. He bade good-bye to both of them without wincing, and looked after Bell for a moment

as she left; and then he went away into a large and gloomy smoking-room, and sat down there in silence. The Lieutenant and I went with him. He was not inclined to speak; and at length von Rosen, apparently to break the horrible spell of the place, said—

"Will they give the horse any corn or water on the journey?"

"I don't think so," said the lad, absently, "but I have telegraphed for a man to be at the station and take the cob into the nearest stables."

And with that he forced himself to talk of some of his adventures by the way, while as yet he was driving by himself; though we could see he was thinking of something very different. At last the train from the North came in. He shook hands with us with a fine indifference; and we saw him bundle himself up in a corner of the carriage, with a cigar in his mouth. There was nothing tragic in his going away; and yet there was not in all England a more wretched creature than the young man who thus started on his lonely night-journey; and I afterwards heard that, up in the railway-hotel at this moment, one tender heart was still beating a little more quickly at the thought of his going, and two wakeful eyes were full of unconscious tears.

CHAPTER XIV.

OVER THE BORDER.

"And here awhile the Muse,
High hovering o'er the broad cerulean scene,
Sees Caledonia in romantic view:
Her airy mountains, from the waving main,
Invested with a keen, diffusive sky,
Breathing the soul acute; her forests huge
Incult, robust, and tall, by Nature's hand
Planted of old; her azure lakes between
Poured out expansive, and of watery wealth
Full; winding, deep, and green, her fertile vales
With many a cool translucent brimming flood
Washed lovely from the Tweed (pure *parent stream*
Whose pastoral banks first heard my Doric reed,
With sylvan Gled, thy tributary brook.)

THAT next morning in Carlisle—as we walked about the red old city that is set amid beautiful green meadows interlaced with streams—there was something about Queen Titania's manner that I could not understand. She arrogated to herself a certain importance. She treated ordinary topics of talk with disdain. She had evidently become possessed of a great secret. Now, everyone knows that the best way to discover a secret is to let the owner of it alone; if it is of great importance, she is sure to tell it you, and if it is of no importance, your ignorance of it won't hurt you.

We were up in that fine old castle, leaning on the parapets of red sandstone and gazing away up to the north, where a line of Scotch hills lay on the horizon.

That is a pretty landscape that lies around Carlisle Castle—the bright and grassy meadows through which the Eden winds, the woods and heights of the country beyond, the far stretches of sand at the mouth of the Solway, and the blue line of hills telling of the wilder regions of Scotland.

In the courtyard below us we can see the Lieutenant instructing Bell in the art of fortification. My Lady looks at them for a moment, and says—

"Bell is near her North Country at last."

There is at all events nothing very startling in that disclosure. She pauses for a moment or two, and is apparently regarding with wistful eyes the brilliant landscape around, across which dashes of shadow are slowly moving from the west. Then she adds—

"I suppose you are rather puzzled to account for Arthur's coming up to see us this last time."

"I never try to account for the insane actions of young people in love."

"That is your own experience, I suppose?" she says, daintily.

"Precisely so—of you. But what is this about Arthur?"

"Don't you really think it looks absurd—his having come to join us a second time for no apparent purpose whatever?"

"Proceed."

"Oh," she says, with some little *hauteur*, "I am not anxious to tell you anything."

"But I am dying to hear. Have you not marked my impatience ever since we set out this morning?"

"No, I haven't. But I will tell you all the same, if you promise to say not a word of it to the Count."

"I? Say anything to the Lieutenant? The man who would betray the confidences of his wife—except when it suited his own purpose— But what have you got to say about Arthur?"

"Only this—that his coming to see us was not so aimless as it might appear. Yesterday he asked Bell definitely if she would marry him."

She smiles—with an air of pride. She knows she has produced a sensation.

"Would you like to know where? In an old inn at High Hesket—where they seem to have been left alone for a minute or two. And Bell told him frankly that she could not marry him."

Think of it! In that deserted old inn, with its forsaken chambers and empty stalls, and occasional visits from a wandering butcher, a tragedy had been enacted so quietly that none of us had known. If folks were always to transact the most important business of their lives in this quiet, undramatic, unobserved way, whence would come all the material for our pictures, and plays, and books? These young people, so far as we knew, had never struck an at-

titude, nor uttered an exclamation; for, now that one had time to remember, on our entering into the parlour where Bell and Arthur had been left, she was quietly looking out of the window, and he came forward to ask how many miles it was to Carlisle. They got into the vehicles outside as if nothing had happened. They chatted as usual on the road into Carlisle. Nay, at dinner, how did those young hypocrites manage to make believe that they were on their old footing, so as to deceive us all?

"My dear," I say to her, "we have been robbed of a scene."

"I am glad there was no scene. There is more likely to be a scene when Arthur goes back and tells Dr. Ashburton that he means to marry Katty Tatham. He is sure to do that; and you know the Doctor was very much in favour of Arthur's marrying Bell."

"Well, now, I suppose, all that is wanted for the completion of your diabolical project is that Bell should marry that young Prussian down there—who will be arrested in a minute or two if he does not drop his inquiries."

Tita looked up with a stare of well-affected surprise.

"That is quite another matter, I assure you. You may be quite certain that Bell did not refuse Count von Rosen before without some very good reason;

and the mere fact of Arthur's going away does not pledge her a bit. No—quite the contrary. He would be very foolish if he asked her at this moment to become his wife. She is very sorry about Arthur, and so am I; but I confess that when I learned his case was hopeless, and that I could do nothing to help him, I was greatly relieved. But don't breathe a word of what I have told you to Count von Rosen—Bell would never forgive me if it were to reach his ears. But oh!" says Queen Tita, almost clasping her hands, while a bright light beams over her face, "I *should* like to see those two married. I am sure they are so fond of each other. Can you doubt it, if you look at them for a moment or two——"

But they had disappeared from the courtyard below. Almost at the same moment that she uttered these words, she instinctively turned, and lo! there were Bell and her companion advancing to join us. The poor little woman blushed dreadfully in spite of all her assumption of gracious self-possession; but it was apparent that the young folks had not overheard, and no harm was done.

At length we started for Gretna. There might have been some obvious jokes going upon this subject, had not some recollection of Arthur interfered. Was it because of his departure, also, that the Lieutenant forbore to press Bell for the Scotch songs that she had promised him? Or was it not rather that the bright-

ness and freshness of this rare forenoon were in themselves sufficient exhilaration? We drove down by the green meadows, and over the Eden bridge. We clambered up the hill opposite, and drove past the suburban villas there. We had got so much accustomed to sweet perfumes floating to us from the hedgerows and the fields, that we at first did not perceive that certain specially pleasant odours were the product of some large nurseries close by. Then we got out to that "shedding" of the roads, which marks the junction of the highways coming down from Glasgow and Edinburgh; and here we chose the former, which would take us through Gretna and Moffat, leaving us to strike eastward towards Edinburgh afterwards.

The old mail-coach road to the North is quite deserted now, but it is a pleasant road for all that, well-made and smooth, with tracts of grass along each side, and tall and profuse hedges that only partially hide from view the dusky northern landscape with its blue line of hills beyond. Mile after mile, however, we did not meet a single creature on this deserted highway; and when at length we reached a solitary turnpike, the woman in charge thereof regarded us with a look of surprise, as if we were a party of runaways who had blundered into the notion that Gretna-green marriages were still possible.

The Lieutenant, who was driving, got talking with the woman about these marriages, and the incidents

that must have occurred at this very turnpike, and of the stories in the neighbourhood about that picturesque and gay old time. She—with her eyes still looking towards our Bell, as if she suspected that the young man had quite an exceptional interest in talking of marriages—told us some of her own reminiscences with a great deal of good humour; but it is sad to think that these anecdotes were chiefly of quarrels and separations—some of them occurring before the happy pair had crossed the first bridge on their homeward route. Whether these stories were not edifying, or whether a great bank of clouds, coming up from the north against the wind, looked very ominous, Bell besought her companion to drive on; and so on he went.

It was a lonely place in which to be caught by a thunderstorm. We came to the river Esk, and found its shallow waters flowing down a broad and shingly channel, leaving long islands of sand between. There was not a house in sight—only the marshy meadows, the river-beds, and the low flats of sand stretching out to the Solway Frith. Scotland was evidently bent on giving us a wet welcome. From the hills in the north those black masses of vapour came crowding up, and a strange silence fell over the land. Then a faint glimmer of red appeared somewhere; and a low noise was heard. Presently a long narrow streak of forked lightning went darting across the black background,

there was a smart roll of thunder, and then all around us the first clustering of heavy rain was heard among the leaves. We had the hood put up hastily. Bell and Tita were speedily swathed in shawls and waterproofs: and the Lieutenant sent the horses on at a good pace, hoping to reach Gretna Green before we should be washed into the Solway. Then began the wild play of the elements. On all sides of us the bewildering glare of steel-blue seemed to flash about, and the horses, terrified by the terrific peals of thunder, went plunging on through the torrents of rain.

"Mademoiselle," cried the Lieutenant, with the water streaming over his face and down his great beard, "your Westmoreland rain,—it was nothing to this."

Bell sat mute and patient, with her face down to escape the blinding torrents. Perhaps had we crossed the Border in beautiful weather, she would have got down from the phaeton, and pulled some pretty flower to take away with her as a memento; but now we could see nothing, hear nothing, think of nothing, but the crashes of the thunder, the persistent waterfall, and those sudden glares that from time to time robbed us of our eyesight for several seconds. Some little time before reaching the river Sark, which is here the boundary-line between the two countries, we passed a small wayside inn; but we did not think of stopping there, when Gretna promised to afford us more certain

shelter. We drove on and over the Sark. We pulled up for a moment at the famous toll-house.

"We are over the Border!" cried Bell, as we drove on again; but what of Scotland could she see in this wild storm of rain?

Surely no runaway lover was ever more glad to see that small church perched up on a hillock among trees than we were when we came in sight of Gretna. But where was the inn? There were a few cottages by the wayside, and there was one woman who kindly came out to look at us.

No sooner had the Lieutenant heard that there was no inn in the place, than, without a word—but with an awful look of determination on his face—he turned the horses clean round and set them off at a gallop down the road to the Sark.

"Perhaps they can't take us in at that small place," said my Lady.

"They must take us in," said he, between his teeth; and with that we found ourselves in England again.

He drove us up to the front of the square building. With his whip-hand he dashed away the rain from his eyes and moustache, and called aloud. Lo! what strange vision was that which appeared to us, in this lonely place, in the middle of a storm? Through the mist of the rain we beheld the doorway of the inn

suddenly becoming the frame of a beautiful picture; and the picture was that of a fair-haired and graceful young creature of eighteen, in a costume of pearly grey touched here and there with lines of blue, who regarded us with a winning expression of wonder and pity in her large and innocent eyes. Her appearance there seemed like a glimmer of sunlight shining through the rain; and a second or two elapsed before the Lieutenant could collect himself so far as to ask whether this angel of deliverance could not shelter us from the rude violence of the storm.

"We have no ostler," says the young lady, in a timid way.

"Have you any stables?" says the young man.

"Yes, we have stables—shall I show them to you?"

"No—no!" he cries, quite vehemently. "Don't you come out into the rain—not at all! I will find them out very well myself; but you must take in the ladies here, and get them dry."

And when we had consigned Bell and Tita to the care of the young lady, who received them with a look of much friendliness and concern in her pretty face, we went off and sought out the stables.

"Now, look here, my good friend," says von Rosen; "we are both wet. The horses have to be groomed—that is very good work to dry one person; and so you

go into the house, and change your clothes, and I will see after the horses, yes?"

"My young friend, it is no use your being very complaisant to me," I observe to him. "I don't mean to intercede with Bell for you."

"Would you intercede with that beautiful young lady of the inn for me? Well, now, that is a devil of a language, yours. How am I to address a girl who is a stranger to me, and to whom I wish to be respectful? I cannot call her Mademoiselle, which is only an old nickname that Mademoiselle used to have in Bonn, as you know. You tell me I cannot address a young lady as "Miss," without mentioning her other name, and I do not know it. Yet I cannot address her with nothing, as if she were a servant. Tell me now—what does an English gentleman say to a young lady whom he may assist at a railway station abroad, and does not know her name? And what, if he does not catch her name, when he is introduced in a house? He cannot say Mademoiselle. He cannot say Fräulein. He cannot say Miss."

"He says nothing at all."

"But that is rudeness—it is awkward to you not to be able to address her."

"Why are you so anxious to know how to talk to this young lady?"

"Because I mean to ask her if it is impossible that she can get a little corn for the horses."

It was tiresome work—that getting the horses out of the wet harness, and grooming them without the implements of grooming. Moreover, we could find nothing but a handful of hay; and it was fortunate that the nosebags we had with us still contained a small allowance of oats and beans.

What a comfortable little family-party, however, we made up in the large warm kitchen! Tita had struck up a great friendship with the gentle and pretty daughter of the house; the old lady, her mother, was busy in having our wraps and rugs hung up to dry before the capacious fireplace; and the servant-maid had begun to cook some chops for us. Bell, too—who might have figured as the elder sister of this flaxen-haired and frank-eyed creature, who had appeared to us in the storm—was greatly interested in her; and was much pleased to hear her distinctly and proudly claim to be Scotch, although it was her misfortune to live a short distance on the wrong side of the Border. And with that the two girls fell to talking about Scotch and Cumbrian words; but here Bell had a tremendous advantage, and pushed it to such an extreme, that her opponent, with a pretty blush and a laugh, said that she did not know the English young ladies knew so much of Scotch. And when Bell protested that she would not be called English,

the girl only stared. You see, she had never had the benefit of hearing the Lieutenant discourse on the history of Strathclyde.

Well, we had our chops and what not in the parlour of the inn; but it was remarkable how soon the Lieutenant proposed that we should return to the kitchen. He pretended that he was anxious to learn Scotch; and affected a profound surprise that the young lady of the inn should not know the meaning of the word "spurtle." When we went into the kitchen, however, it was to the mamma that he addressed himself chiefly; and behold! she speedily revealed to the young soldier that she was the widow of one of the Gretna priests. More than that I don't mean to say. Some of you young fellows who may read this might perhaps like to know the name and the precise whereabouts of the fair wild-flower that we found blooming up in these remote solitudes; but neither shall be revealed. If there was any of us who fell in love with the sweet and gentle face, it was Queen Tita; and I know not what compacts about photographs may not have been made between the two women.

Meanwhile the Lieutenant had established himself as a great favourite with the elderly lady, and by and by she left the kitchen, and came back with a sheet of paper in her hand, which she presented to him. It turned out to be one of the forms of the marriage-

certificates used by her husband in former days; and for curiosity's sake I append it below, suppressing the name of the priest for obvious reasons.

KINGDOM OF SCOTLAND.

COUNTY OF DUMFRIES.

Parish of Gretna.

These are to Certify *to all whom these presents shall come, that* * * * *from the parish of* * * * *in the County of* * * * *and* * * * *from the parish of* * * * *in the County of* * * * *being now here present, and having declared themselves single persons, were this day Married after the manner of the Laws of the Church of England, and agreeable to the Laws of Scotland; as Witness our hands, Allison's Bank Toll-house, this* * * * *day of* * * * 18 .

Before * * * { _____ _____

Witnesses, { _____ _____

"That is a dangerous paper to carry about wi' ye," said the old woman, with a smile.

"Why so?" inquired the Lieutenant.

"Because ye might be tempted to ask a young leddy to sign her name there;" and what should prevent that innocent-eyed girl turning just at this moment to look with a pleased smile at our Bell? The Lieutenant laughed, in an embarrassed way, and said the rugs might as well be taken from before the fire, as they were quite dry now.

I think none of us would have been sorry to have stayed the night in this homely and comfortable little inn, but we wished to get on to Lockerbie, so as to reach Edinburgh in other two days. Moreover, the clouds had broken, and there was a pale glimmer of sunshine appearing over the dark green woods and meadows. We had the horses put into the phaeton again, and with many a friendly word of thanks to the good people who had been so kind to us, we started once more to cross the Border.

"And what do you think of the first Scotch family you have seen?" says Queen Tita to the Lieutenant, as we cross the bridge again.

"Madame," he says, quite earnestly, "I did dream for a moment I was in Germany again—everything so friendly and homely, and the young lady not too proud to wait on you, and help the servant in the cooking; and then, when that is over, to talk to you with good education, and intelligence, and great simpleness and frankness. Oh, that is very good—whether it is Scotch, or German, or any other country —the simple ways, and the friendliness, and the absence of all the fashions and the hypocrisy."

"That young lady was very fashionably dressed, Count von Rosen," says Tita with a smile.

"That is nothing, Madame. Did she not bring in to us our dinner, just as the daughter of the house in a German country inn would do, as a compliment to

you, and not to let the servant come in? Is it debasement, do you think? No. You do respect her for it; and you yourself, Madame, you did speak to her as if she were an old friend of yours—and why not, when you find people like that, honest and good-willing towards you?"

What demon of mischief was it that prompted Bell to sing that song as we drove through the darkening woods in this damp twilight? The Lieutenant had just got out her guitar for her when he was led into these fierce statements quoted above. And Bell with a great gravity, sang—

"Farewell to Glenshalloch, a farewell for ever,
Farewell to my wee cot that stands by the river;
The fall is loud-sounding in voices that vary,
And the echoes surrounding lament with my Mary."

This much may be said, that the name of the young lady of whom they had been speaking was also Mary; and the Lieutenant, divining some profound sarcasm in the song, began to laugh and protest that it was not because the girl was pretty and gentle that he had discovered so much excellence in the customs of Scotch households. Then Bell sang once more—as the sun went down behind the woods, and we heard the streams murmuring in deep valleys by the side of the road—

"Hame, hame, hame, O hame fain would I be,
Hame, hame, hame, to my ain countree;
There's an eye that ever weeps, and a fair face will be fain,
As I pass through Annan water, wi' my bonny bands again!"

We drive into the long village of Ecclefechan, and pause for a moment or two in front of the Bush Inn to let the horses have a draught of water and oatmeal. The Lieutenant, who has descended to look after this prescription, now comes out from the inn bearing a small tray with some tumblers on it.

"Madame," said he, "here is Scotch whisky—you must all drink it, for the good of the country."

"And of ourselves," says one of us, calling attention to the chill dampness of the night-air.

My Lady pleaded for a bit of sugar, but that was not allowed; and when she had been induced to take about a third of the Lieutenant's preparation, she put down the glass with an air of having done her duty. As for Bell, she drank pretty nearly half the quantity; and the chances are that if the Lieutenant had handed her prussic acid, she would have felt herself bound, as a compliment, to accept it.

Darker and darker grew the landscape as we drove through the thick woods. And when, at last, we got into Lockerbie there was scarcely enough light of any sort to show us that the town, like most Scotch country towns and villages, was whitewashed. In the inn at which we stopped, appropriately named the Blue Bell, the Lieutenant once more remarked on the exceeding homeliness and friendliness of the Scotch. The landlord simply adopted us, and gave us advice in a grave, paternal fashion, about what we should have for sup-

per. The waiter who attended us took quite a friendly interest in our trip; and said he would himself go and see that the horses which had accomplished such a feat were being properly looked after. Bell was immensely proud that she could understand one or two phrases that were rather obscure to the rest of the party; and the Lieutenant still further delighted her by declaring that he wished we could travel for months through this friendly land, which reminded him of his own country. Perhaps the inquisitive reader, having learned that we drank Scotch whisky at the Bush Inn of Ecclefechan, would like to know what we drank at the Blue Bell of Lockerbie. He may address a letter to Queen Titania on that subject, and he will doubtless receive a perfectly frank answer.

[*Note by Queen Titania.*—"I do not see why our pretty Bell should be made the chief subject of all the foregoing revelations. I will say this, that she and myself were convinced that we never saw two men *more jealous of each other* than those two were in that inn near the Border. The old lady was *quite amused by it;* but I do not think the girl herself noticed it, for she is a very innocent and gentle young thing, and has probably had no experience of such *absurdities*. But I would like to ask who first mentioned that subject of photographs; and who proposed to send her a whole series of engravings; and who offered to send her a volume of German songs. If Arthur had been there, we should have had the laugh all on our side; but now I suppose they will deny that anything of the kind took place—with the ordinary candour of gentlemen who are *found out.*"]

CHAPTER XV.

TWEED SIDE.

"Ah, happy Lycius!—for she was a maid!
More beautiful than ever twisted braid,
Or sighed, or blushed, or on spring-flowered lea
Spread a green kirtle to the minstrelsy;
A virgin purest-lipped, yet in the lore
Of love deep learned to the red heart's core."

THE very first object that we saw, on this the first morning of our waking in Scotland, was a small boy of seven or eight, brown-faced, yellow-haired, bare-footed, who was marching along in the sunlight with a bag of school-books on his back about as big as himself.

"Oh, the brave little fellow!" cries Tita, regarding him from the door of the inn with a great softness in her brown eyes. "Don't you think he will be Lord Chancellor some day?"

The future Lord Chancellor went steadily on, his small brown feet taking no heed of the stones in the white road.

"I think," says Tita, suddenly plunging her hand into her pocket, "I think I should like to give him a shilling."

"No, Madame," says one of us to her, sternly; "you shall not bring into this free land the corrupting influences of the south. It is enough that you have

debased the district around your own home. If you offered that young patriot a shilling, he would turn again and rend you. But if you offered him a half-penny, now, to buy bools——"

At this moment, somehow or other, Bell and our Lieutenant appear together; and before we know where we are, the girl has darted across the street in pursuit of the boy.

"What are bools?" asked the Lieutenant gravely.

"Objects of interest to the youthful student."

Then we see, in the white glare of the sun, a wistful, small, fair and sunburned face turned towards that young lady with the voluminous light brown hair. She is apparently talking to him, but in a different tongue from his own, and he looks frightened. Then the sunlight glitters on two white coins, and Bell pats him kindly on the shoulder; and doubtless the little fellow proceeds on his way to school in a sort of wild and wonderful dream, having an awful sense that he has been spoken to by a fair and gracious princess.

"As I live," says my Lady, with a great surprise, "she has given him two half-crowns!"

Queen Titania looks at me. There is a meaning in her look—partly interrogation, partly conviction, and wholly kind and pleasant. It has dawned upon her that girls who are not blessed with abundant pocket-money do not give away five shillings to a

passing schoolboy without some profound emotional cause. Bell comes across the way, looking vastly pleased and proud, but somehow avoiding our eyes. She would have gone into the inn, but that my Lady's majestic presence (you could have fanned her out of the way with a butterfly's wing!) barred the entrance.

"Have you been for a walk this morning, Bell?" she says, with a fine air of indifference.

"Yes, Madame," replies our Uhlan—as if he had any business to answer for our Bell.

"Where did you go?"

"Oh," says the girl with some confusion, "we went —we went away from the town a little way—I don't exactly know——"

And with that she escaped into the inn.

"Madame," says the Lieutenant, with a great apparent effort, while he keeps his eyes looking towards the pavement, and there is a brief touch of extra colour in his brown face, "Madame—I—I am asked —indeed, Mademoiselle she was good enough—she is to be my wife—and she did ask me if I would tell you——"

And somehow he put out his hand—just as a German boy shakes hands with you, in a timid fashion, after you have tipped him at school—and took Tita's hand in his, as if to thank her for a great gift. And the little woman was so touched, and so mightily

pleased, that I thought she would have kissed him before my very face, in the open streets of Lockerbie. All this scene, you must remember, took place on the doorstep of an odd little inn in a small Scotch country-town. There were few spectators. The sun was shining down on the white fronts of the cottages, and blinking on the windows. A cart of hay stood opposite to us, with the horse slowly munching inside his nosebag. We ourselves were engaged in peacefully waiting for breakfast when the astounding news burst upon us.

"Oh, I am very glad, indeed, Count von Rosen," says Tita; and, sure enough, there was gladness written all over her face and in her eyes. And then in a minute she had sneaked away from us, and I knew she had gone away to seek Bell, and stroke her hair and put her arms round her neck, and say, "Oh, my dear," with a little sob of delight.

Well, I turn to the Lieutenant. Young men, when they have been accepted, wear a most annoying air of self-satisfaction.

"Touching those settlements," I say to him; "have you any remark to make?"

The young man begins to laugh.

"It is no laughing matter. I am Bell's guardian. You have not got my consent yet."

"We can do without it—it is not an opera," he says, with some more of that insolent coolness. "But

you would be pleased to prevent the marriage, yes? For I have seen it often—that you are more jealous of Mademoiselle than of anyone—and it is a wonder to me that you did not interfere before. But as for Madame, now—yes, she is my very good friend, and has helped me very much."

Such is the gratitude of those conceited young fellows, and their penetration, too! If he had but known that only a few days before Tita had taken a solemn vow to help Arthur by every means in her power, so as to atone for any injustice she might have done him! But all at once he says, with quite a burst of eloquence (for him)—

"My dear friend, how am I to thank you for all this? I did not know when I proposed to come to England that this holiday tour would bring me so much happiness. It does appear to me I am grown very rich—so rich I should like to give something to everybody this morning—and make everyone happy as myself——"

"Just as Bell gave the boy five shillings. All right. When you get to Edinburgh you can buy Tita a Scotch collie—she is determined to have a collie, because Mrs. Quinet got a prize for one at the Crystal Palace. Come in to breakfast."

Bell was sitting there with her face in shadow, and Tita, laughing in a very affectionate way, standing beside her with her hands on the girl's shoulder. Bell

did not look up; nothing was said. A very friendly waiter put breakfast on the table. The landlord dropped in to bid us good morning, and see that we were comfortable. Even the ostler, the Lieutenant told us afterwards, of this Scotch inn had conversed with him in a shrewd, homely, and sensible fashion, treating him as a young man who would naturally like to have the advice of his elders.

The young people were vastly delighted with the homely ways of this Scotch inn; and began to indulge in vague theories about parochial education, independence of character, and the hardihood of northern races—all tending to the honour and glory of Scotland. You would have thought, to hear them go on in this fashion, that all the good of the world, and all its beauty and kindliness, were concentrated in the Scotch town of Lockerbie, and that in Lockerbie no place was so much the pet of fortune as the Blue Bell Inn.

"And to think," says Bell, with a gentle regret, "that to-morrow is the last day of our driving."

"But not the last of our holiday, Mademoiselle," says the Lieutenant. "Is it necessary that any of us goes back to England for a week or two, or a month, or two months?"

Of course the pair of them would have liked very well to start off on another month's excursion, just as this one was finished. But parents and guardians have

their duties. Very soon they would be in a position to control their own actions; and then they would be welcome to start for Kamschatka.

All that could be said in praise of Scotland had been said in the inn; and now, as Castor and Pollux took us away from Lockerbie into the hillier regions of Dumfries-shire, our young people were wholly at a loss for words to describe their delight. It was a glorious day, to begin with: a light breeze tempering the hot sunlight, and blowing about the perfume of sweet-briar from the fronts of the stone cottages, and bringing us warm and resinous odours from the woods of larch and spruce. We crossed deep glens, along the bottom of which ran clear brown streams over beds of pebbles. The warm light fell on the sides of those rocky clefts and lit up the masses of young rowan-trees and the luxuriant ferns along the moist banks. There was a richly cultivated and undulating country lying all around; but few houses, and those chiefly farmhouses. Far beyond, the rounded hills of Moffat rose soft and blue into the white sky. Then, in the stillness of the bright day, we came upon a wayside school; and as it happened to be dinner-time we stopped to see the stream of little ones come out. It was a pretty sight, under the shadow of the trees, to see that troop of children come into the country road —most of them being girls, in extremely white pinafores, and nearly all of them, boys and girls, being

yellow-haired, clear-eyed, healthy children, who kept very silent and stared shyly at the horses and the phaeton. All the younger ones had bare feet, stained with the sun, and their yellow hair—which looked almost white by the side of their berry-brown cheeks—was free from cap or bonnet. They did not say, "Chuck us a 'apenny." They did not raise a cheer as we drove off. They stood by the side of the road, close by the hawthorn hedge, looking timidly after us; and the last that we saw of them was that they had got into the middle of the path and were slowly going off home—a small, bright, and various-coloured group under the soft green twilight of an avenue of trees.

As we drove on through the clear, warm day, careless and content, the two women had all the talking to themselves; and a strange use they made of their opportunities. If the guardian angels of those two creatures happen to have any sense of humour, they must have laughed as they looked down and overheard. You may remember that when it was first proposed to take this Prussian Lieutenant with us on our summer tour, both Bell and my Lady professed the most deadly hatred of the German nation, and were nearly weeping tears over the desolate condition of France. That was about six months before. Now, thirty millions of people, either in the south or north of Europe, don't change their collective character—if such a thing exists—within the space of six months;

but on this bright morning you would have fancied that the women were vying with each other to prove that all the domestic virtues, and all the science and learning of civilization, and all the arts that beautify life, were the exclusive property of the Teutons. My Lady was a later convert—had she not made merry only the other day over Bell's naïve confession that she thought the German nation as good as the French nation?—but now that she had gone over to the enemy, she altogether distanced Bell in the production of theories, facts, quotations, and downright personal opinion. She had lived a little longer, you see, and knew more; and perhaps she had a trifle more audacity in suppressing awkward facts. At all events the Lieutenant was partly abashed and partly amused by her warm advocacy of German character, literature, music, and a thousand other things; and by her endeavours to prove—out of the historical lessons she had taught her two boys—that there had always prevailed in this country a strong antipathy to the French and all their ways.

"Their language too," I remark, to keep the ball rolling. "Observe the difference between the polished, fluent, and delicate German, and the barbaric dissonance and jumble of the French! How elegant the one, how harsh the other! If you were to take Bossuet, now——"

"It is not fair," says Bell. "We were talking

quite seriously, and you come in to make a jest of it."

"I don't. Are you aware that, at a lecture Coleridge gave in the Royal Institution in 1808, he solemnly thanked his Maker that he did not know a word of *that frightful jargon, the French language?*"

The women were much impressed. They would not have dared, themselves, to say a word against the French language; nevertheless, Coleridge was a person of authority. Bell looked as if she would like to have some further opinions of this sort; but Mr. Freeman had not at that time uttered his epigram about the general resemblance of a Norman farmer to "a man of Yorkshire or Lincolnshire who has somehow picked up a bad habit of talking French," nor that other about a Dane who, "in his sojourn in Gaul, had put on a slight French varnish, and who came into England to be washed clean again."

"Now," I say to Bell, "if you had only civilly asked me to join in the argument, I could have given you all sorts of testimony to the worth of the Germans and the despicable nature of the French."

"Yes, to make the whole thing absurd," says Bell, somewhat hurt. "I don't think you believe anything seriously."

"Not in national characteristics even? If not in them, what are we to believe? But I will help you all the same, Bell. Now, did you ever hear of a sonnet

in which Wordsworth, after recalling some of the great names of the Commonwealth time, goes on to say—

"'France, 'tis strange,
Hath brought forth no such souls as we had then.
Perpetual emptiness! unceasing change!
No single volume paramount, no code,
No master spirit, no determined road;
But equally a want of books and men!'

Does that please you?"

"Yes," says Bell, contentedly.

"Well, did you ever read a poem called "Hands all Round?"

"No."

"You never heard of a writer in the *Examiner* called 'Merlin,' whom people to this day maintain was the Poet Laureate of England?"

"No."

"Well, listen:—

"'What health to France, if France be she
Whom martial progress only charms?
Yet tell her—better to be free
Than vanquish all the world in arms.
Her frantic city's flashing heats
But fire, to blast, the hopes of men.
Why change the titles of your streets?
You fools, you'll want them all again.
Hands all round!
God the tyrant's cause confound!
To France, the wiser France, we drink, my friends,
And the great name of England, round and round!'

At that time, Miss Bell, thousands of people in this country were disquieted about the possible projects of the new French Government; and as it was considered

that the Second Napoleon would seek to establish his power by the fame of foreign conquest——"

"This is quite a historical lecture," says Queen Tita, in an undertone.

"——and as the Napoleonic legend included the humiliation of England, many thoughtful men began to cast about for a possible ally with whom we could take the field. To which country did they turn, do you think?"

"To Germany, of course," says Bell, in the most natural way in the world.

"Listen again:—

'Gigantic daughter of the West,
We drink to thee across the flood.
We know thee, and we love thee best,
For art thou not of British blood?
Should war's mad blast again be blown,
Permit not thou the tyrant powers
To fight thy mother here alone,
But let thy broadsides roar with ours.
Hands all round!
God the tyrant's cause confound!
To our dear kinsmen of the West, my friends,
And the great name of England, round and round!'"

Bell seemed a little disappointed that America and not Germany had been singled out by the poet; but of course nations don't choose allies merely to please a girl who happens to have engaged herself to marry a Prussian officer.

"Now," I say to her, "you see what aid I might have given you, if you only had asked me prettily.

But suppose we give Germany a turn now—suppose we search about for all the unpleasant things——"

"Oh no, please don't," says Bell, submissively.

This piece of unfairness was so obvious and extreme that von Rosen himself was at last goaded into taking up the cause of France, and even went the length of suggesting that peradventure ten righteous men might be found within the city of Paris. 'Twas a notable concession. I had begun to despair of France. But no sooner had the Lieutenant turned the tide in her favour than my Lady and Bell seemed graciously disposed to be generous. Chateaubriand was not Goethe, but he was a pleasing writer. Alfred de Musset was not Heine, but he had the merit of resembling him. If Auber did not exactly reach the position of a Beethoven or a Mozart, one had listened to worse operas than the "Crown Diamonds." The women did not know much about philosophy; but while they were sure that all the learning and wisdom of the world had come from Germany, they allowed that France had produced a few epigrams. In this amiable frame of mind we drove along the white road on this summer day; and after having passed the great gap in the Moffat Hills which leads through to St. Mary's Loch and all the wonders of the Ettrick and the Yarrow, we drove into Moffat itself, and found ourselves in a large hotel fronting a great sunlit and empty square.

Our young people had really conducted themselves very discreetly. All that forenoon you would scarcely have imagined that they had just made a solemn promise to marry each other; but then they had been pretty much occupied with ancient and modern history. Now, as we entered a room in the hotel, the Lieutenant espied a number of flowers in a big glass vase; and without any pretence of concealment whatever, he walked up to it, selected a white rose, and brought it back to Bell.

"Mademoiselle," he said, in a low voice—but who could help hearing him?—"you did give to me, the other day, a forget-me-not; will you take this rose?"

Mademoiselle looked rather shy for a moment; but she took the rose, and—with an affectation of unconcern which did not conceal an extra touch of colour in her pretty face—she said, "Oh, thank you very much," and proceeded to put it into the bosom of her dress.

"Madame," said the Lieutenant, just as if nothing had occurred, "I suppose Moffat is a sort of Scotch Baden-Baden?"

Madame, in turn, smiled sedately, and looked out of the window, and said that she thought it was.

When we went out for a lounge after luncheon, we discovered that if Moffat is to be likened to Baden-Baden, it forms an exceedingly Scotch and respectable

Baden-Baden. The building in which the mineral waters are drunk* looks somewhat like an educational institution, painted white, and with prim white iron railings. Inside, instead of that splendid saloon of the Conversationshaus in which, amid a glare of gas, various characters, doubtful and otherwise, walk up and down and chat while their friends are losing five-franc pieces and napoleons in the adjoining chambers, we found a long and sober-looking reading-room. Moffat itself is a white, clean, wide-streeted place, and the hills around it are smooth and green; but it is very far removed from Baden-Baden. It is a good deal more proper, and a great deal more dull. Perhaps we did not visit it in the height of the season, if it has got a season; but we were at all events not very sorry to get away from it again, and out into the hilly country beyond.

That was a pretty drive up through Annandale. As you leave Moffat the road gradually ascends into the region of the hills; and down below you lies a great valley, with the river Annan running through it, and the town of Moffat itself getting smaller in the

* "Bien entendu, d'ailleurs, que le but du voyage
Est de prendre les eaux; c'est un compte réglé.
D'eaux, je n'en ai point vu lorsque j'y suis allé;
Mais qu'on ou puisse voir, je n'en mets rien en gage;
Je crois même, en honneur, que l'eau de voisinage
A, quand on l'examine, un petit goût salé."

A. DE MUSSET.

distance. You catch a glimmer of the blue peaks of Westmoreland lying far away in the south, half hid amid silver haze. The hills around you increase in size, and yet you would not recognize the bulk of the great round slopes but for those minute dots that you can make out to be sheep, and for an occasional wasplike creature that you suppose to be a horse. The evening draws on. The yellow light on the slopes of green becomes warmer. You arrive at a great circular chasm which is called by the country-folks the Devil's Beef-tub—a mighty hollow, the western sides of which are steeped in a soft purple shadow, while the eastern slopes burn yellow in the sunlight. Far away down in that misty purple you can see tints of grey, and these are masses of slate uncovered by grass. The descent seems too abrupt for cattle, and yet there are faint specks which may be sheep. There is no house, not even a farmhouse, near; and all traces of Moffat and its neighbourhood have long been left out of sight.

But what is the solitude of this place to that of the wild and lofty region you enter when you reach the summits of the hills? Far away on every side of you stretch miles of lonely moorland, with the shoulders of more distant hills reaching down in endless succession into the western sky. There is no sign of life in this wild place. The stony road over which you drive was once a mail-coach road: now it is overgrown with grass. A few old stakes, rotten and tumbling, show

where it was necessary at one time to place a protection against the sudden descents on the side of the road; but now the road itself seems lapsing back into moorland. It is up in this wilderness of heather and wet moss that the Tweed takes its rise; but we could hear no trickling of any stream to break the profound and melancholy stillness. There was not even a shepherd's hut visible; and we drove on in silence, scarcely daring to break the charm of the utter loneliness of the place.

The road twists round to the right. Before us a long valley is seen, and we guess that it receives the waters of the Tweed. Almost immediately afterwards we come upon a tiny rivulet some two feet in width—either the young Tweed itself or one of its various sources; and as we drive on in the gathering twilight towards the valley it seems as though we were accompanied by innumerable streamlets trickling down the river. The fire of the sunset goes out in the west, but over there in the clear green-white of the east a range of hills still glows with a strange roseate purple. We hear the low murmuring of the Tweed in the silence of the valley. We get down among the lower-lying hills, and the neighbourhood of the river seems to have drawn to it thousands of wild creatures. There are plover calling and whirling over the marshy levels. There are black cock and grey hen dusting themselves in the road before us, and waiting until we are quite near

to them before they wing their straight flight up to the heaths above. Far over us, in the clear green of the sky, a brace of wild duck go swiftly past. A weasel glides out and over the grey stones by the roadside; and further along the bank there are young rabbits watching, and trotting, and watching again, as the phaeton gets nearer to them. And then, as the deep rose purple of the eastern hills fades away, and all the dark green valley of the Tweed lies under the cold silver-grey of the twilight, we reach a small and solitary inn, and are almost surprised to hear once more the sound of a human voice.

CHAPTER XVI.

OUR EPILOGUE.

"Nor much it grieves
To die, when summer dies on the cold sward.
Why, I have been a butterfly, a lord
Of flowers, garlands, love-knots, silly posies,
Groves, meadows, melodies, and arbour-roses:
My kingdom's at its death."

WHEN you have dined on ham and eggs and whisky the evening before, to breakfast on ham and eggs and tea is a great relief the morning after. We gathered round the table in this remote little inn with much thankfulness of heart. We were to have a glorious day for the close of our journey. All round the Crook Inn there was a glare of sunshine on the rowan-

trees. The soft greys and greens of the hills on the other side of the river rose into a pale-blue sky where there was not a single cloud. And then, to complete the picture of the moorland hostelry, appeared a keeper who had just set free from their kennel a lot of hand-some setters, and the dogs were flying hither and thither along the white road and over the grass and weeds by the tall hedges.

"Do you know," said Bell, "that this used to be a posting-house that had thirty horses in its own stables; and now it is only used by a few sportsmen who come here for the fishing and later on for the shooting?"

So she, too, had taken to getting up in the morn-ing and acquiring information.

"Yes," she said, "but it has been taken by a new landlord, who hopes to have gentlemen come and lodge here by the month in the autumn."

She was beginning to show a great interest in the affairs of strangers: hitherto she had cared for none of these things, except where one of our Surrey pensioners was concerned.

"And the ostler is such an intelligent and in-dependent old man, who lets you know that he under-stands horses a great deal better than you."

I could see that my Lady was mentally tracking out Bell's wanderings of the morning. Under whose

tuition had she discovered all that about the landlord? Under whose guidance had she found herself talking to an ostler in the neighbourhood of the stables? But she had not devoted the whole morning to such inquiries. We remarked that the Lieutenant wore in his button-hole a small bouquet of tiny wild-flowers, the faint colours of which were most skilfully combined and shown up by a bit of fern placed behind them. You may be sure that it was not the clumsy fingers of the young Uhlan that had achieved that work of art.

"And now, my dear children," I observe, from the head of the table, "we have arrived at the last stage of our travels. We have done nothing that we ought to have done; we have done everything that we ought not to have done. As one of you has already pointed out, we have never visited a museum, or explored a ruin, or sought out a historical scene. Our very course has been inconsistent, abnormal, unreasonable —indeed, if one were to imagine a sheet of lightning getting tipsy and wandering over the country in a helpless fashion for several days, that might describe our route. We have had no adventures that could be called adventures, no experiences to turn our hair grey in a dozen hours; only a general sense of light, and fresh air, and motion, and laughter. We have seen green fields, and blue skies, and silver lakes; we have seen bright mornings and breezy days, and spent

comfortable evenings in comfortable inns. Shall we not look back upon this month in our lives, and call it the month of sunshine and green leaves?"

Here a tapping all round the table greeted the orator, and somewhat disconcerted him; but presently he proceeded:—

"If, at times, one member of our party, in the reckless exercise of a gift of repartee which heaven, for some inscrutable reason, has granted her, has put a needle or two into our couch of eider-down——"

"I pronounce this meeting dissolved," says Bell quickly, and with a resolute air.

"Yes, Mademoiselle," put in the Lieutenant. "It is dissolved. But as it breaks up—it is a solemn occasion—might we not drink one glass of champagne——"

Here a shout of laughter overwhelmed the young man. Champagne up in these wild moorland of Peebles, where the youthful Tweed and its tributaries wander through an absolute solitude! The motion was negatived without a division; and then we went out to look after Castor and Pollux.

All that forenoon we were chased by a cloud as we drove down the valley of the Tweed. Around us there was abundant sunlight—falling on the grey bed of the river, the brown water, the green banks and hills beyond; but down in the southwest was a great mass of cloud which came slowly advancing with its

gloom. Here we were still in the brightness of the yellow glare, with a cool breeze stirring the rowan-trees and the tall weeds by the side of the river. Then, as we got further down the valley, the bed of the stream grew broader. There were great banks of grey pebbles visible, and the brown water running in shallow channels between, where the stones fretted its surface, and caused a murmur that seemed to fill the silence of the smooth hills around. Here and there a solitary fisherman was visible, standing in the river and persistently whipping the stream with his supple fly-rod. A few cottages began to appear, at considerable intervals. But we came to no village; and as for an inn, we never expected to see one. We drove leisurely along the now level road, through a country rich with waving fields of grain, and dotted here and there with comfortable-looking farmhouses.

Then Bell sang to us:—

"Upon a time I chanced
To walk along the green,
Where pretty lasses danced
In strife, to choose a queen;
Some homely dressed, some handsome,
Some pretty and some gay,
But who excelled in dancing
Must be the Queen of May."

But when she had sung the last verse—

"Then all the rest in sorrow,
And she in sweet content,
Gave over till the morrow,
And homewards straight they went.

But she, of all the rest,
Was hindered by the way,
For every youth that met her
Must kiss the Queen of May,"—

my Lady said it was very pretty, only why did Bell sing an English song after she had been trying to persuade us that she held the English and their music in contempt?

"Now, did I ever say anything like that?" said Bell, turning in an injured way to the Lieutenant.

"No," says he, boldly. If she had asked him to swear that two and two were seven, he would have said that the man was a paralyzed imbecile who did not know it already.

"But I will sing you a Scotch song, if you please," says Bell, shrewdly suspecting that that was the object of Tita's protest.

"Will ye gang to the Hielands, Leezie Lindsay?"

—this was what Bell sang now—

"Will ye gang to the Hielands wi' me?
Will ye gang to the Hielands, Leezie Lindsay,
My pride and my darling to be?"

"To gang to the Hielands wi' you, sir,
I dinna ken how that may be;
For I ken nae the land that you live in,
Nor ken I the lad I'm gaun wi'."

And so forth to the end, where the young lady "kilts up her coats o' green satin," and is off with Lord Ronald Macdonald. Probably the Lieutenant meant

only to show that he knew the meaning of the word "Hielands;" but when he said—

"And we do go to the Highlands, yes?" the girl was greatly taken aback. It seemed as though he were coolly placing himself and her in the position of the hero and heroine of the song; and my Lady smiled, and Bell got confused, and the Lieutenant, not knowing what was the matter, stared, and then turned to me to repeat the question. By this time Bell had recovered herself, and she answered hastily—

"Oh yes, we shall go to the Highlands, shall we not?—to the Trossachs, and Ben Nevis, and Auchenasheen——"

"And Orkney too, Bell? Do you know the wild proposal you are making in laying out plans for another month's holiday?"

"And why not?" says the Lieutenant. "It is only a pretence, this talk of much work. You shall send the horses and phaeton back by the rail from Edinburgh; then you are free to go away anywhere for another month. Is it not so, Madame?"

Madame is silent. She knows that she has only to say "yes" to have the thing settled; but thoughts of home and the cares of that pauperized parish crowd in upon her mind.

"I suppose we shall get letters from the boys to-night, when we reach Edinburgh. There will be letters from home, too, saying whether everything is

right down there. There may be no reason for going back at once."

She was evidently yielding. Was it that she wanted to give those young people the chance of a summer ramble which they would remember for the rest of their life? The prospect lent a kindly look to her face; and, indeed, the whole of them looked so exceedingly happy, and so dangerously forgetful of the graver aspects of life, that it was thought desirable to ask them whether there might not be a message from Arthur among the batch of letters awaiting us in Edinburgh.

'Twas a random stroke, but it struck home. The conscience of these careless people was touched. They knew in their inmost hearts that they had wholly forgotten that unhappy young man whom they had sent back to Twickenham with all his faith in human nature destroyed for ever. But was it pity for him that now filled their faces, or a vague dread that Arthur might, in the last extremity of his madness, have gone up to Edinburgh by rail to meet us there?

"He promised us an important communication," says my Lady.

She would not say that it was understood to refer to his marriage; but that was the impression he had left. Very probably, too, she was haunted by speculations as to how such a marriage, if it took place, would turn out; and whether little Katty Tatham would

be able to reconcile Arthur to his lot, and convince him that he was very fortunate in not having married that faithless Bell.

"Madame," said the Lieutenant, suddenly—he did not care to have that pitiful fellow Arthur receive so much consideration—"this is a very sober country. Shall we never come to an inn? The champagne I spoke of, that has gone away as a dream; but on this warm day a little lemonade and a little whisky—that would do to drink the health of our last drive, yes! But there is no inn—nothing but those fields of corn, and farmhouses."

At last, however, we came to a village. The Lieutenant proposed to pull up and give Castor and Pollux a mouthful of water and oatmeal—it was always Castor and Pollux that were supposed to be thirsty. But what was his amazement to find that in the village there was no inn of any kind!

"I wish there were some villages of this sort down in our part of the country," says Queen Tita, with a sigh. "With us, they build the public-house first, and that draws other houses."

And with that Bell began to relate to the Lieutenant how my Lady was once vexed beyond measure to find—just as she was coming out of an obscure public-house on a Sunday morning, after having compelled the tipsy and quarrelling landlord thereof to beg forgiveness of his wife—a whole group of visitors

at the Squire's house coming along the road from church, and staring at her as if she had gone into the public for refreshment. It was a vastly interesting story, perhaps; but the sulky young man paid little heed to it. He wore an injured look. He kept looking far ahead along the road; and, although it was a very pretty road, he did not seem satisfied. At length he pulled the horses up, and hailed a farmer who, in his white shirt-sleeves, was working in a field close by, along with a domestic group of fellow-labourers.

"I say," called out the Lieutenant, "isn't there an inn on this road?"

"Ay, that there is," said the man, with a grim smile, as he rose up and drew his sleeve across his forehead.

"How far yet?"

"Twa miles. It's a temperance hoose!"

"A temperance hoose," said the Lieutenant to Bell; "what is a temperance hoose?"

"They don't sell any spirits there, or beer, or wine."

"And is that what is called temperance?" said the Lieutenant, in a peevish way; and then he called out again, "Look here, my good friend, when do we come to a proper kind of inn?"

"There is an inn at Ledburn—that's eight miles on."

"Eight miles! And where was the last one we passed?"

"Well, that maun be about seven miles back."

"Thank you. It is healthy for you, perhaps, but how you can live in a place where there is no public-house not for fifteen miles—well, it is a wonder. Good day to you!"

"Gude day, sir!" said the farmer, with a broad, good-humoured laugh on his face; the Lieutenant was obviously not the first thirsty soul who had complained of the scarcity of inns in these parts.

"These poor horses," growled the Lieutenant as we drove on. "It is the hottest day we have had. The clouds have gone away, and we have beaten in the race. And other eight miles in this heat——"

He would probably have gone on compassionating the horses, but that he caught a glimpse of Bell demurely smiling, and then he said—

"Ha, you think I speak for myself, Mademoiselle? That also, for when you give your horses water, you should drink yourself always, for the good of the inn. But now that we can get nothing, Madame, shall we imagine it, yes? What we shall drink at the Ledburn inn? Have you tried, on a hot day, this—one glass of sparkling hock poured into a tumbler, then a bottle of seltzer water, then three drops of Angostura bitters, and a lump of ice? That is very good; and this too —you put a glass of pale sherry in the tumbler, then a little lemon juice——"

"Please, Count von Rosen, may I put it down in

my note-book?" says Tita, hurriedly. "You know I have your recipe for a luncheon. Wouldn't these do for it?"

"Yes, and for you!" says a third voice. "What madness has seized you, to talk of ice and hock in connection with Ledburn? If you get decent Scotch whisky and ham and eggs for luncheon, you may consider yourselves well off."

"I am a little tired of that sort of banquet," says my Lady, with a gentle look of resignation. "Couldn't we drive on to Edinburgh?"

But for the sake of the horses, we should all have been glad to do that; for the appearance of this Ledburn inn, when we got to it, impressed us with awe and terror. 'Tis a cutthroat-looking place. The dingy dilapidated building stands at the parting of two roads; the doors were shut as we drove up to it, there was no one about of whom we could ask a question. It looked the sort of place for travellers to reach at dead of night, and become the subject of one or other of the sombre adventures which are associated with remote and gloomy inns in the annals of romance. When we did get hold of the landlord, his appearance was not prepossessing. He was a taciturn and surly person. There was apparently no ostler, and he helped von Rosen to take the horses out of the phaeton, but he did so in a fashion which awoke the ire of the Lieutenant to a serious degree, and some sharp words

were being bandied about when I drove the women into the inn.

"That is a dreadful person," said my Lady.

"Why? He has become morose in this solitary inn, that is all. If you were shut up here for a few years, what would you become?"

We had ham and eggs and whisky in a dingy little chamber upstairs. The women would touch nothing—notwithstanding that the Lieutenant came in to announce that the shoe of one of the horses had got loose, and that a smith would have to be sent for from some distance off. Moreover, when the smith did come, it was found that our ingenious landlord had not informed him what was required of him, and consequently he had brought no tools. Should we send the horse back with him, or would he despatch a boy for his tools?

"How many miles is it to Edinburgh?" says my Lady.

"About a dozen, I should think."

"We couldn't walk that, do you think?" she says to Bell, with a doubtful air.

Bell could walk it very well, I know; but she regards her companion for a moment, and says—

"We must not try."

Looking at this fix, and at the annoyance the women experienced in being detained in this inhospitable hostelry, that young Prussian got dreadfully en-

raged. He was all the more wroth that there was no one on whom he could reasonably vent his anger; and, in fact, it was a most fortunate thing for our host that he had at last condescended to be a little more civil. The Lieutenant came up into the room, and proposed that we should play at bézique. Impossible. Or would Mademoiselle care to have the guitar taken out? Mademoiselle would prefer to have it remain where it was. And at length we went outside and sat in the yard, or prowled along the uninteresting road, until the smith arrived, and then we had the horses put in and set out upon the last stage of our journey.

We drove on in the deepening sunset. The ranges of the Pentland Hills on our left were growing darker, and the wild moorland country around was getting to be of a deeper and deeper purple. Sometimes, from the higher portions of the road, we caught a glimpse of Arthur's Seat, and in the whiter sky of the north-east it lay there like a pale-blue cloud. We passed through Pennycuick, picturesquely placed along the wooded banks of the North Esk. But we were driving leisurely enough along the level road, for the horses had done a good day's work, and there still remained a few miles before they had earned their rest.

Was it because we were driving near a great city that von Rosen somewhat abruptly asked my Lady what was the best part of London to live in? The question was an odd one for a young man. Bell

pretended not to hear—she was busy with the reins. Whereupon Tita began to converse with her companion on the troubles of taking a house, and how your friends would inevitably wonder how you could have chosen such a neighbourhood instead of their neighbourhood, and assure you, with much compassion, that you had paid far too much for it.

"And as for Pimlico," I say to him, "you can't live there; the sight of its stucco would kill you in a month. And as for Brompton, you can't live there; it lies a hundred feet below the level of the Thames. And as for South Kensington, you can't live there; it is a huddled mass of mews. And as for Belgravia or Mayfair, you can't live there; for you could not pay the rent of a good house, and the bad houses are in slums. Paddington?—a thousand miles from a theatre. Hampstead?—good-bye to your friends. Bloomsbury?—the dulness of it will send you to an early grave. Islington?—you will acquire a Scotch accent in a fortnight. Clapham?—you will become a Dissenter. Denmark Hill?—they will exclude you from all the fashionable directories. Brixton?—the 'endless meal of brick' will drive you mad. But then it is true that Pimlico is the best-drained part of London. And Brompton has the most beautiful old gardens. And South Kensington brings you close to all sorts of artistic treasures. And Hampstead has a healthy situation. And Mayfair is close to the Park. And Clap-

ham is close to several commons, and offers you excellent drives. And Denmark Hill is buried in trees, and you descend from it into meadows and country lanes. And Islington is celebrated for possessing the prettiest girls in the world. And Brixton has a gravelly soil—so that you see, looking at all these considerations, you will have no difficulty whatever in deciding where you ought to live."

"I think," said the young man, gravely, "the easiest way of choosing a house in London is to take one in the country."

"Oh, do live in the country!" exclaims Tita, with much anxiety. "You can go so easily up to London and take rooms about Bond Street or in Half-moon Street, if you wish to see pictures or theatres. And what part of the country near London could you get prettier than down by Leatherhead?"

Bell is not appealed to. She will not hear. She pretends to be desperately concerned about the horses. And so the discussion is postponed, *sine die*, until the evening; and in the gathering darkness we approach Edinburgh.

How long the way seemed on this the last night of our driving! The clear twilight faded away; and the skies overhead began to show faint throbbings of the stars. A pale yellow glow on the horizon told us where the lights of Edinburgh were afire. The road grew almost indistinguishable; but overhead the great

worlds became more visible in the deep vault of blue. In a perfect silence we drove along the still highway, between the dark hedges; and clearer and more clear became the white constellations, trembling in the dark. What was my Lady thinking of—of Arthur, or her boys at Twickenham, or of long-forgotten days at Eastbourne—as she looked up at all the wonders of the night? There lay King Charles's Wain as we had often regarded it from a boat at sea, as we lay idly on the lapping waves. The jewels on Cassiopeia's chair glimmered faint and pale; and all the brilliant stars of the Dragon's hide trembled in the dark. The one bright star of the Swan recalled many an evening in the olden times; and here, nearer at hand, Capella shone, and there Cepheus looked over to the pole-star as from the distance of another universe. Somehow it seemed to us that under the great and throbbing vault the sea ought to be lying clear and dark; but these were other masses we saw before us, where the crags of Arthur's Seat rose sharp and black into the sky. We ran in almost under the shadow of that silent mass of hill. We drew nearer to the town; and then we saw before us long and waving lines of red fire—the gas-lamps of a mighty street. We left the majesty of the night outside, and were soon in the heart of the great city. Our journey was at an end.

But when the horses had been consigned to their

stables, and all arrangements made for their transference next day to London, we sat down at the window of a Princes Street Hotel. The tables behind were inviting enough. Our evening meal had been ordered, and at length the Lieutenant had the wish of his heart in procuring the Schaumwein with which to drink to the good health of our good horses that had brought us so far. But what in all the journey was there to equal the magic sight that lay before us as we turned to these big panes? Beyond a gulf of blackness the old town of Edinburgh rose with a thousand points of fire into the clear sky of a summer night. The tall houses, with their eight or nine stories, had their innumerable windows ablaze; and the points of orange light shone in the still blue shadow until they seemed to form part of some splendid and enchanted palace built on the slopes of a lofty hill. And then beyond that we could see the great crags of the Castle looming dark in the starlight, and we knew, rather than saw, that there were walls and turrets up there, cold and distant, looking down on the yellow glare of the city beneath. What was Cologne with the coloured lamps of its steamers—as you see them cross the yellow waters of the Rhine when a full moon shines over the houses of Deutz—or what was Prague with its countless spires piercing the starlight and its great bridge crossing over to the wooded heights of the Hradschin—compared to this

magnificent spectacle in the noblest city of the world? The lights of the distant houses went out one by one. The streets became silent. Even the stars grew paler; but why was that? A faint light, golden and soft, began to steal along the Castle-hill; and the slow, mild radiance touched the sharp slopes, the trees, and the great grey walls above, which were under the stars.

"Oh, my dear," says Tita, quite gently, to Bell, "we have seen nothing like that, not even in your own country of the Lakes!"

[*Note by Queen Titania.*—"It seems they have put upon me the responsibility of saying *the last word*, which is not quite fair. In the old comedies it was always the *heroine* of the piece who came forward to the footlights, and in her prettiest way spoke the epilogue; and of course the heroine was always young and nice-looking. If *Bell* would only do that, now, I am sure you would be pleased; but she is afraid to appear in public. *As for myself*, I don't know what to say. Count von Rosen suggests that I should copy some of the ancient authors and merely say 'Farewell, and clap your hands;' but very likely that is a joke—for who can tell when gentlemen *intend to be amusing?*—and perhaps they never said anything so foolish. But, as you are not to be addressed by the heroine of the piece, perhaps, considering my age—*which I am seldom allowed to forget*—perhaps a word of advice may be permitted. And that is to the ladies and gentlemen who always go abroad and spend a great deal of time and money in hiring carriages to drive them in foreign parts. Of course everyone ought to go abroad; but why every year! I am sure I am not *prejudiced*, and I never enjoyed any tour abroad so much as this one through England. I do consider England (and of course you must include Scotland and Ireland) *the most beautiful country in the world.* I have never been to America; but that does not matter. It *cannot be* more beautiful than England. If it is, so much the better, but I for one am quite satisfied with England; and as for the old-

fashioned and quaint places you meet on a driving tour such as this, I am sure the American ladies and gentlemen whom I have met have always admitted to me that they were *delightful*. Well, that is all. I shall say nothing about our young friends, for I think *sufficient revelations* have been made in the foregoing pages. Arthur has only been to see us once since our return, and of course we could not ask him the reason of his getting married *so unexpectedly*, for Katty was with him, and very pleased and happy she looked. Arthur was very civil to our Bell; which shows that his marriage has improved him *in one respect;* but he was a little cold and distant at the same time. The poor girl was dreadfully frightened; but she made herself very friendly to him, and kissed little Katty in the *most affectionate* manner when they were going away. Luckily, perhaps, Lieutenant von Rosen was up in London; but when he came down next day, Bell had a great deal to tell him in private; and the result of the conversation—of which we *elderly folks*, of course, are not permitted to know anything—seemed to be very pleasing to them both. Then there was a talk between my husband and him in the evening about a loose-box in certain stables. Bell came and put her arm round my waist, and besought me *very prettily* to tell her what were the nicest colours for a drawing-room. It seems there is some house, about a couple of miles from here, which they have visited; but I am not going to tell you any more. As our Bell is too shy to come forward, I suppose I must say good-bye for her, and thank you *very much indeed* for coming with us so far on such a long and roundabout journey.—T."]

THE END.

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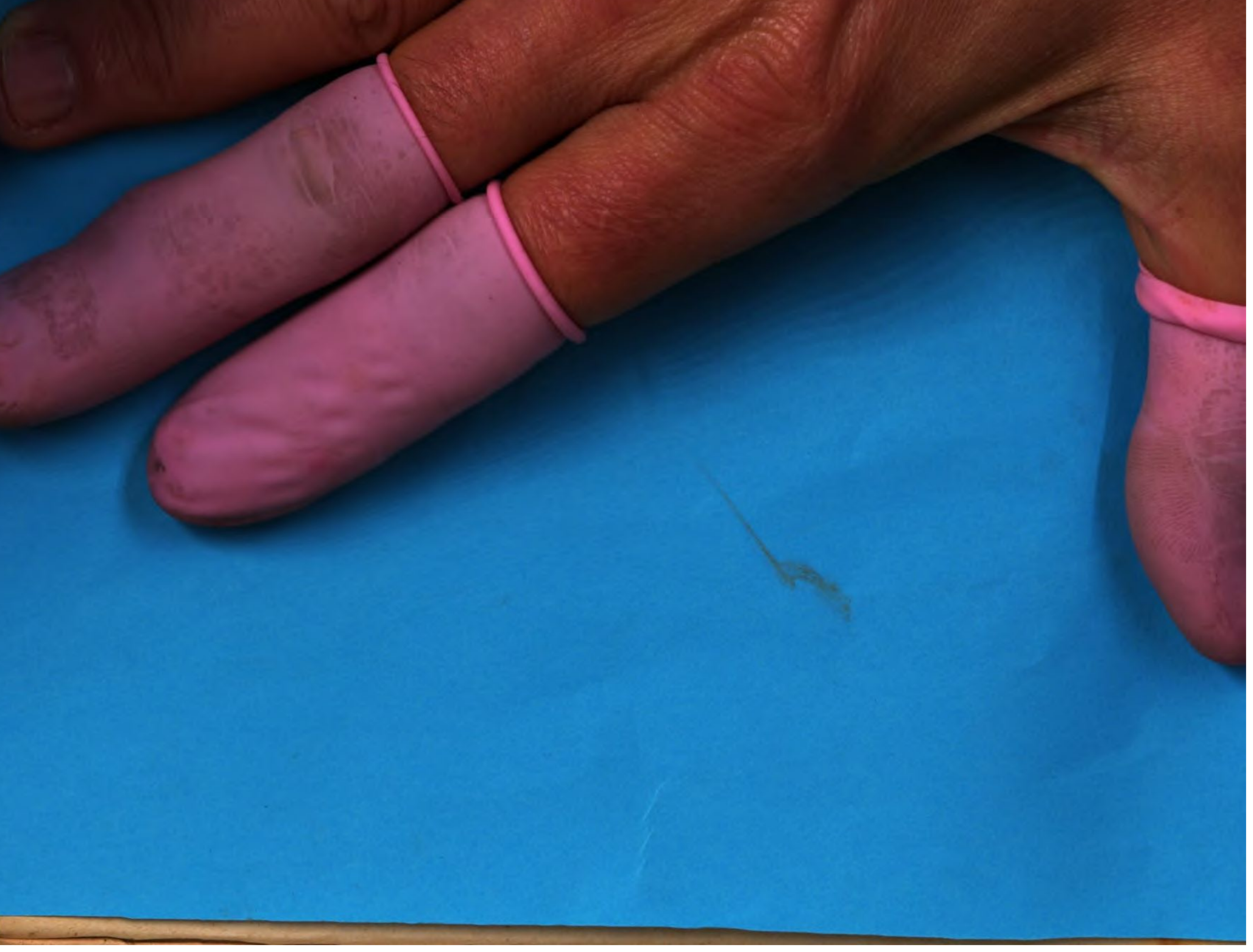

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